

**THE DARK SIDE OF EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP: A MULTILEVEL  
STUDY OF DIFFERENTIATED LEADERSHIP ON TEAM AND INDIVIDUAL  
DYNAMIC PERFORMANCE**

A Dissertation

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this study I integrate self-determination theory and social comparison theory to create a new theoretical lens that highlights the multilevel dark side of empowering leadership. Examining how team leaders differentially empower team members stands in contrast to prior research, which has limited its analyses to the effects of individual-focused or team-focused empowering leadership. I examine the social underpinnings of empowering leadership by analyzing differentiated empowering leadership (DEL) within teams and its effects on team dynamics. In so doing, I propose that DEL triggers team members to engage in social comparisons among one another regarding the empowering leadership they receive. These social comparisons generate negative relationships among team members, restricting the team's collective ability to initiate and adapt to change, particularly among teams with higher levels of task interdependence. I also theoretically argue the existence of two unique cross-level processes through which DEL impacts team member psychological empowerment, and in turn individual proactive and adaptive performance. First, I theorize that DEL stimulates team member psychological empowerment through empowering leadership-social comparisons (ELSC). Second, I propose that DEL undermines team member psychological empowerment by producing relationship conflicts among team members. In summary, I highlight the multi-level processes and boundary condition through which DEL negatively impact team dynamic performance and individual team member motivation and subsequent dynamic performance. To test the proposed relationships I gathered data from 72 teams across four industries. Although the data revealed that ELSC is positively linked to

psychological empowerment, revealing the impact of ELSC above and beyond the direct effects of individual empowering leadership and leader-member exchange (LMX), the data did not fully support any of the other hypotheses. Nonetheless, the data reveal that DEL does impact team learning and individual adaptability through team and individual engagement. Thus, team leaders should consider how they go about empowering their team members, because the more differentially they empower them, the less engaged they will be in their collective and individual work. These subsequent findings also display that DEL is unique from LMX differentiation and that future research should explore other effects DEL has on team and individual outcomes.

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

With high levels of complexity and uncertainty becoming more common in today's continuously changing business environment, firms are forced to embrace more dynamic forms of performance by allowing the roles of employees and teams to emerge organically from the bottom-up (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007; Kozlowski, Watola, Jensen, Kim, & Botero, 2009; Parker & Collins, 2010). This is because it is "not possible any longer to 'figure it out' from the top" (Senge, 1990, p. 4; see Morrison & Miliken, 2000). Thus, if firms want to retain their competitive advantages or overcome the competitive advantages of their competitors, then they must enable their employees' roles to dynamically emerge by allowing employees and their environment to interact. Along these lines, Johnson (2003) explicitly noted, "Many industries change quickly, and successful organizations adapt and provide novel products, services, and processes" (p. 52). Accordingly, two distinct forms of dynamic performance that have been shown to be particularly important are proactive performance (defined as initiating change, being self-starting, and being future-directed) and adaptive performance (defined as coping with, responding to, and supporting change) (Burke, Stagl, Salas, Pierce, & Kendall, 2006; Griffin et al., 2007; Williams, Parker, & Turner, 2010). The benefits of proactive and adaptive performance are well known, as they have been positively linked to both individual task performance (Crant, 1995; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001; Shoss, Witt, & Vera, 2012) and team performance (DeRue, Hollenbeck, Johnson, Ilgen, & Jundt, 2008; Kickul & Gundry, 2002).

One established driver of proactive and adaptive performance is empowering leadership – the extent to which a leader’s behaviors consist of promoting self-directed and autonomous work, delegating responsibilities, seeking participative advice, encouraging high expectations, and expressing confidence (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999) (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005; Chen, Sharma, Edinger, Shapiro, & Farh, 2011; Martin, Liao, & Campbell, 2013; Raub & Roberts, 2010). Indeed, practitioners and scholars alike have consistently viewed empowering leadership as a way of giving employees the flexibility and control they need to promote change as well as adapt to changes that take place around them. In fact, some scholars have coined empowering leadership as “SuperLeadership,” because it entails leading others to proactively lead themselves (Manz & Sims, 1989; 1991). With that in mind, there is extensive research focused on the positive impact that empowering leadership has on individual and team motivation, and in turn different facets of dynamic performance. For example, individual-focused empowering leadership has been linked to organizational commitment (Harris, Li, Boswell, Zhang, Xie, & 2014), engagement (Tuckey, Bakker, & Dollard, 2012), adaptive selling (Ahearne et al., 2005), and creativity (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Moreover, team-focused empowering leadership (i.e., mean amount of individual empowering leadership within a team) has been connected to team empowerment (Chen, Kirkman, Kanfer, Allen, & Rosen, 2007), team knowledge sharing and team efficacy (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006), team planning processes (Rapp, Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2010), and team proactivity (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999). Interestingly, researchers have also begun analyzing the cross-level effects of team-

focused empowering leadership on team member motivation and subsequent dynamic behaviors. For instance, Raub and Roberts (2010) and Chen et al. (2011) found team-focused empowering leadership to augment psychological empowerment and, in turn, team member innovative behavior and challenge behavior.

A common theory used to explain the positive effects of empowering leadership is self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Martin et al., 2013; Raub & Robert, 2013). SDT suggests that all people have innate psychological needs for *autonomy* (i.e., the need to be self-regulating, the maker, or owner of one's choices), *competence* (i.e., the need to be effective in one's tasks, mastering current skills and developing new skills in the process), and *relatedness* (the need to be close to, trusting of, caring of, and cared for by others, Deci & Ryan, 2012). SDT argues that when environmental stimuli (e.g., leadership behaviors and team dynamics) satisfy these needs within individuals, then those individuals experience heightened intrinsic motivation (defined as "the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, to extend and exercise one's capacities, to explore, and to learn," Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 70). Subsequently, SDT directly contends that intrinsically motivated individuals exhibit a greater level of ownership and involvement in their tasks, which results in augmented levels of proactivity and risk taking (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Strauss & Parker, 2014). Furthermore, SDT also argues that intrinsically motivated individuals are more adaptable, because they are more persistent, creative, and cognitively flexible when faced with changes and challenges (see also Gagne & Deci, 2005; Grant & Berry, 2011; Kozlowski et al., 2009; Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, &

Plamondon, 2000; Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004). Founded on SDT, scholars have situated empowering leadership as an environmental stimulus that satisfies individuals' need for autonomy and competence, which generates intrinsic motivation and subsequent dynamic performance (Martin et al., 2013; Raub & Roberts, 2010). Nonetheless, to date, scholars have limited their analyses of SDT to only consider how the leader treats the employee as an individual or the team as a collective (i.e., "me" or "us" perspective) when it comes to satisfying the individual's or team's psychological needs. For example, when an empowering leader gives an employee autonomy or responsibilities over an important task, then the individual perceives his or her psychological needs for autonomy and competence to be satisfied, resulting in enhanced intrinsic motivation and subsequent dynamic performance (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Gagne & Deci, 2005; Raub & Roberts, 2010).

However, social comparison theory employs a competing perspective, suggesting that the "me" or "us" perspective espoused in SDT overlooks the social ramifications of employees receiving relatively more or less empowering leadership from their leaders in comparison to what is received by their other team members (i.e., "me versus them" perspective). Specifically, social comparison theory contends that individuals use socially available information, such as received autonomy and delegated responsibilities (i.e., components of empowering leadership), as points of social comparison to evaluate their relative competence, abilities, and value in a team (Festinger, 1954; Kim & Glomb, 2014; Wood, 1996). This is because when a leader differentially gives autonomy and delegates responsibilities to team members, team members perceive that treatment as a

top-down behavioral indicator that indicates that the leader has more trust and confidence in the abilities of some team members relative to other team members. Indeed, there is preliminary evidence that leaders differentially delegate tasks and responsibilities to their employees when they perceive them as being more competent and espousing more leader-employee goal congruence (Yukl, 1999). As a result, by differentially empowering their team members, leaders shape the experience and cognitions of the team members, providing them with socially available information about the leader's perception of each member's competence, abilities, and value to the team (Henderson, Liden, Glibkowski, & Chaudhry, 2009; Kelley, 1968; Klein, Dansereau, & Hall, 1994).

Along these lines, scholars argue that social comparisons are “a central feature of human social life” (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007, p. 3). Moreover, there is extensive research indicating that one's standing relative to others impacts individuals' attitudes, aspirations, and behaviors (Wood, 1989), in addition to interpersonal relationships (Festinger, 1954; Forsyth, 2000). As a result, differentially applying empowering leadership within a team may negatively impact team members' interpersonal relationships, and in turn individual and team dynamic performance due to team members' social comparisons with regards to received empowering leadership (see Kim & Glomb, 2014; Lam, Van der Vegt, Walter, & Huang, 2011; Li & Liao, 2014). Conversely, when leaders empower their subordinates equally, then social comparisons with regards to empowering leadership received are minimized (Colquitt, Zapata-Phelan, & Roberson, 2005; Festinger, 1954; Greenberg, Ashton-James, & Ashkanasy, 2007),

because there is no social cue or information that indicates differences in competence, abilities, or value to the team.

Along these same lines, the literature on leader-member exchange (LMX) has shown that people socially compare the relationship quality they have with a leader (e.g., LMX) to the relationship quality that close others have with the same leader (Vidyarthi, Liden, Anand, Erdogan, & Ghosh, 2010). A fundamental difference between the LMX and empowering leadership literatures is that LMX is founded on two-way relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), with no specific behaviors, whereas empowering leadership is a set of specific behaviors geared toward enhancing employee motivation by giving them power and authority to engage in meaningful and impactful tasks (Chen et al., 2007; Kirkman and Rosen, 1999). At present, the LMX-social comparison literature has primarily analyzed how individuals compare how well their need for relatedness is satisfied relative to the satisfaction of others' need for relatedness (Vidyarthi et al., 2010). In contrast, I propose that empowering leadership-social comparisons are founded on individuals making social comparisons about how well their needs for autonomy and competence are satisfied relative to the satisfaction of others' need for autonomy and competence (Raub & Roberts, 2010; Wood, 1989). This distinction is critical to make, because social comparison theory explicitly notes that social comparisons are especially strong when social information is tied to perceived competence (Festinger, 1954). As a result, the integrative lens of social comparison theory and SDT would suggest that the effects of empowering leadership-social comparison should occur above and beyond the effects of LMX social comparison.

In summary, a critical shortcoming of the extant approach used to understand the effects of empowering leadership is that it has taken an oversimplified approach that has not considered the social comparison effects of leaders differentially empowering individuals within teams. As a result, using SDT as a theoretical framework, past research on empowering leadership predominantly highlights the positive effects of empowering leadership on individual and team outcomes (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Nonetheless, by analyzing empowering leadership applied toward individuals within teams through an integrative lens of SDT and social comparison theory, I reveal a novel theoretical model that highlights how and when empowering leadership *negatively* impacts individual and team proactive and adaptive performance.

### **Overview of Theoretical Model**

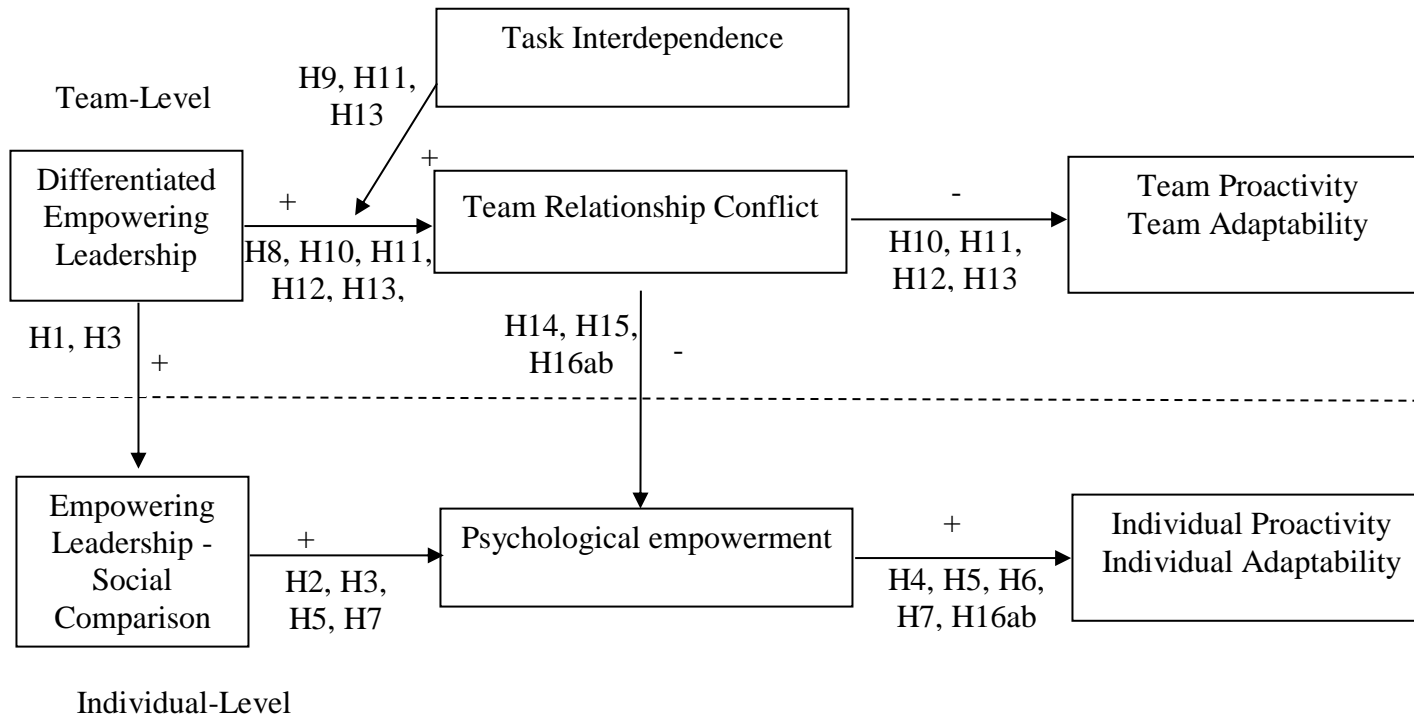
By integrating SDT and social comparison theory, in this study I develop a new theoretical perspective on empowering leadership, thus revealing the dark side of empowering leadership in terms of negatively affecting both individual and team dynamic performance (i.e., proactive and adaptive performance). Specifically, focusing on the social context of empowering leadership, I use a new integrative theoretical lens to generate a model that examines the multilevel processes and contingencies through which team-level differentiated empowering leadership – defined as the extent to which a team leader uniquely empowers individual team members within a team – and individual empowering leadership-social comparison – defined as the individual’s comparison between the level of empowering leadership one receives from a leader to



the level that coworkers receive – concurrently impact individual and team proactive and adaptive performance through team relationship conflict and individual psychological empowerment (see Figure 1 for my model).

To begin, I generalize the concept of differentiated leadership that has been applied in situational leadership theory (Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer 1979; Fiedler, 1964, 1967), LMX theory (Dansereau, Graen, Haga, 1975), transformational differentiated leadership (Wu, Tsui, & Kinicki, 2010), and empirical evidence of dyadic empowering leadership (Harris et al., 2014; Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Zhang & Bartol, 2010) to empowering leadership, thus introducing the concept of differentiated empowering leadership (i.e., a team-level construct that captures the extent to which leaders uniquely empower individual team members within a team). With an understanding of differentiated empowering leadership, I use an integrative perspective of SDT and social comparison theory to contend that differentiated empowering leadership stimulates team members to engage in empowering leadership-social comparisons. Subsequently, those team members that perceive themselves as superior – or perceive themselves as receiving more empowering leadership than other team members – are likely to experience higher levels of psychological empowerment, and in turn display more individual dynamic performance. Conversely, those that perceive themselves as inferior – or less empowered by their leader relative to other team members – are likely to experience less psychological empowerment and in turn less individual dynamic performance.

**FIGURE 1** – Proposed Theoretical Model



Following past research (Chen et al., 2007; Raub & Roberts, 2010; Seibert, Wang, & Courtright, 2011; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), I conceptualize intrinsic motivation as psychological empowerment, because it is a comprehensive form of “intrinsic motivation manifested in four cognitions reflecting an individual’s orientation to his or her work role” (Spreitzer, 1995, p. 484). The four cognitions are *impact* (perception that one’s role makes a difference), *meaning* (intrinsically caring about one’s role), *competence* (belief in one’s capability to perform one’s role), and *self-determination* (sense of autonomy to initiate and regulate one’s actions). My rationale for doing this is supported by theory, which suggests that intrinsic motivation is at its highest when all four cognitions are high (Seibert et al., 2011; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

At the team level, social comparison theory suggests that differentiated empowering leadership may trigger negative interpersonal relationships among team members (Festinger, 1954), because differential treatment among team members stimulates them to make contrasting social comparisons among one another (Colquitt et al., 2005; Festinger, 1954; Gilbert, Giesler, & Morris, 1995; Greenberg et al., 2007). Festinger (1954) argues that two individual-level responses to contrast-based social comparisons are interpersonal withdrawal and hostility (see Wood, 1989). At the team level of analysis, collective interpersonal withdrawal and hostility are characterized as team relationship conflict – defined as tension, annoyance, and animosity of a personal, non-task nature among team members (Chen et al., 2011; Jehn, 1995). Teams with higher levels of relationship conflict are less likely to synchronize their efforts and tasks

in a way that allows them to effectively initiate change (i.e., team proactive performance) or adapt to changes and threats that influence the team (i.e., team adaptive performance). For this reason I examine the indirect effects of differentiated empowering leadership on team proactive and adaptive performance through team relationship conflict.

As an important structural form of team interactions (Colquitt, 2004; Courtright, Thurgood, Stewart, Periotti, in press; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003), social comparison theorists have argued that team task interdependence (defined as the level in which a team's tasks require interaction among group members; Pearce & Gregersen, 1991) augments the frequency and effects of within-team social comparisons (Greenberg et al., 2007; Molleman, Nauta, & Buunk, 2007). As a result, teams that simultaneously experience higher levels of differentiated empowering leadership and team task interdependence are likely to experience magnified levels of team relationship conflict. Furthermore, vaulted levels of team relationship conflict further deplete teams' abilities to engage in team proactive and adaptive performance. Thus, I position team task interdependence as an important moderator of the indirect effect between differentiated empowering leadership and team dynamic performance through team relationship conflict.

After developing two unique processes that stem from differentiated empowering leadership (one at the individual-level and the other at the team-level of analysis) to impact individual and team proactive and adaptive performance, I examine the indirect effects of differentiated empowering leadership on individual psychological

empowerment through team relationship conflict. This is because intra-team hostility and animosity likely undermine the satisfaction of team members' need for relatedness and competence, which compromises team members' psychological empowerment. Although past research has analyzed the simultaneous direct effects of team empowering leadership and team relationship conflict on individual psychological empowerment (Chen et al., 2011), that research found mixed results. Furthermore, no research has shown how differentiated empowering leadership in a team setting minimizes team member psychological empowerment through team relationship conflict. Subsequently, I also examine the indirect effect of team relationship conflict on team member proactive and adaptive performance through team member psychological empowerment.

### **Theoretical and Practical Contributions**

The theoretical integration of SDT and social comparison theory makes several unique contributions to research and theory. First, examining empowering leadership through the integrative lens of both SDT and social comparison theory, I theoretically reveal a new way to view empowering leadership by highlighting its dark side. Specifically, I show how empowering leadership can negatively impact team proactive and adaptive performance when it is given differentially among team members by producing team relationship conflict. This integrative perspective is theoretically and practically impactful, because it adds to a limited literature that shows empowering leadership does not always produce positive outcomes. Although there is extant research that has examined the dark side of empowering leadership (Humborstad & Giessner, in

press; Humborstad, Kuvaas, 2013; Humborstad, Nerstad, & Dysvik, 2014; van Dijke, De Cremer, Mayer, & van Quaquebeke, 2012), this study contributes to that limited research in three ways. One contribution is that it theoretically expands the criterion variables that are negatively impacted by empowering leadership to include two unique forms of dynamic performance (e.g. proactive and adaptive performance). In contrast, past research has focused on individual task performance, prosocial organizational citizenship behaviors, and leadership effectiveness (Humborstad et al., 2014; Humborstad et al., in press; van Dijke et al., 2012). Another contribution of the current study is that it reveals that empowering leadership not only negatively impacts individual-level outcomes, but also hinders the synchronization of team members' activities, which reduces team-level outcomes. Furthermore, although leadership has been proposed as a predictor of team adaptive performance (Burke et al., 2006), no research has tested that assertion, thus this is the first study to link empowering leadership to team adaptive performance. Showing how empowering leadership negatively impacts team outcomes is a critical contribution, because there is limited research that shows how team leadership impacts the synchronization of individual team members' tasks and ultimately team effectiveness (DeChurch, Hiller, Murase, Doty, & Salas, 2010; Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008). Finally, the study reveals two new mediational mechanisms (e.g., team relationship conflict and team member psychological empowerment) through which differentiated empowering leadership impacts dynamic performance.

Second, a limitation of past research on empowering leadership, particularly at the team level of analysis, is the one-size-fits all assumption – that leaders empower individual team members homogenously (Ford & Fottler, 2005; Forrester, 2000). As a result, past scholars have limited their team-focused investigations of the effects of empowering leadership to the team members’ average perception of their leaders’ empowering leadership behaviors (e.g., direct consensus or referent shift; see Chan, 1998; Chen et al., 2011; Martin et al., 2013; Raub & Roberts, 2010). By so doing, some would argue that past research has obscured the true distribution of team members’ responses, thus overlooking potentially valuable effects of empowering leadership and subsequent team dynamics due to overlooking within-team variation with regards to empowering leadership behaviors (Lindell & Brandt, 2000). Furthermore, statisticians (Cole, Bedeian, Hirschfeld, & Vogal, 2011) note that by failing to analyze differentiated variables, such as differentiated empowering leadership, past research has likely oversimplified the team-level effects of empowering leadership, resulting in potential understated and equivocal findings (e.g., Colquitt, Noe, & Jackson, 2002; Dineen, Noe, Shaw, Duffy, & Wiethoff, 2007; Naumann & Bennett, 2002). In response to these shortcomings, in this study I analyze the direct and interactive effects of within-team empowering leadership variance on team- and individual-level outcomes, providing a more complete understanding of the effects of empowering leadership. As a result, this study answers the call for more research to analyze leadership differentiation and its effect on teams and individual team members (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997; Wu et al., 2010).

Third, although the use of SDT as a theoretical framework has increased our understanding of how empowering leadership motivates individuals and collective teams toward higher dynamic performance, researchers have confined their analyses of empowering leadership (and SDT) to a dyadic or collective perspective (e.g., Chen et al., 2007; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Martin et al., 2013; Raub & Roberts, 2010). This results in an important shortcoming, because individuals frequently reside inside of teams, thus SDT's "me" or "us" perspective (i.e., dyadic or collective perspectives) has not accounted for the social ramifications of team members receiving more or less empowering leadership relative to other team members from their leader (i.e., differentiated empowering leadership), which social comparison theory suggests will drive "me versus them" comparisons (Festinger, 1954). Subsequently, a key contribution of this study is revealing that empowering leadership behaviors are key social cues exhibited by leaders that drive social comparisons within teams. Furthermore, I reveal that those social comparisons and their negative outcomes take place above and beyond leader-member relationship quality (i.e., LMX; Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), thus displaying that leader behaviors toward individuals drive social comparisons within teams beyond what is already known about leader-member relationship quality differentiation and social comparisons (Vidyarthi et al., 2010). By introducing differentiated empowering leadership and empowering leadership-social comparison to the literature, I provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of empowering leadership. This is theoretically noteworthy, because situational leadership theory (Hersey et al., 1979; Fiedler, 1964) suggests that differential leadership



is an effective way to develop and motivate employees. I challenge situational leadership theory by showing that although differentially empowering team members may benefit some individuals, it also can severely hurt team dynamics and in turn undermine both team and individual dynamic performance.

Fourth, being that social comparison theory was developed to analyze individuals' responses to interpersonal comparisons, the organizational behavior research on social comparisons has been predominantly focused on individual-level outcomes (Molleman et al., 2007). Only one other study has examined the effects of social comparison theory on team level dynamics and outcomes, and that study focused on team performance (Li & Liao, 2014) rather than dynamic outcomes, such as team proactive and adaptive performance. Thus, while scholars argue that social comparison theory impacts individual-level proactive and adaptive performance (Buunk & Mussweiler, 2001), this study expands the criterion of social comparison theory to include more dynamic team-level outcomes, such as team proactive and adaptive performance

Fifth, with between 50-90% of all workers in the U.S. participating in some form of work teams (Colquitt, et al., 2005), supervisors and managers oftentimes simultaneously lead both individual team members and the team as a collective (Cohen & Bailey, 1997; Hackman, 2002; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003). As a result, scholars have argued that multi-level processes between the team and its members are essential to fully understanding team and individual effectiveness (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003).

Nevertheless, prior studies have examined empowering leadership as though it exists in a

vacuum by not considering the effect of team-level empowering leadership on the motivational capacity of individual-focused empowering leadership. Given that team members are simultaneously exposed to individual-focused empowering leadership and team-level differentiated empowering leadership, it is important to understand how these two environmental stimuli collectively impact team member motivation (Chen et al., 2011), because it allows us to more fully understand how empowering leadership focused at two unique levels of analysis are entangled across levels (Li & Liao, 2014). It also provides additional evidence of the “dynamic interplay between the individuals within a team and the team as a whole” (Chen et al., 2007, p. 331). By analyzing this relationship through the integrative lens of SDT and social comparison theory, I reveal how differentiated empowering leadership impacts individuals’ psychological empowerment and dynamic performance by producing empowering leadership-social comparisons and team relationship conflict.

Finally, there are multiple other minor contributions of this research. Situating team relationship conflict as an environmental stimulus (Gagne & Deci, 2005), I explain how it undermines team member psychological empowerment by compromising members’ needs for relatedness and competence. By so doing, I answer a call by Maynard, Gilson, and Mathieu (2012) to analyze the effects of peer relationships on individual psychological empowerment. I further contribute to the cross-level literature by showing how team relationship conflict, due to differentiating empowering leadership, crosses levels to undermine team member psychological empowerment. Moreover, I contribute to the literature by revealing that team relationship conflict

negatively impacts individual proactive and adaptive performance by undermining individual psychological empowerment. This study's cross-level effects provide critical evidence that team-level variables interactively and indirectly impact individual behaviors through individual motivation (see Chen & Kanfer, 2006). Furthermore, these multilevel hypotheses answer numerous calls for research to apply a more holistic approach to analyzing the multilevel effects of leadership (DeChurch et al., 2010; Yammarino, Dionne, Chun, & Dansereau, 2005).

## **CHAPTER II**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW, THEORETICAL MODEL, AND HYPOTHESES**

Within this chapter, first, I outline what empowering leadership consists of and differentiate it from other existing leadership constructs. Second, I explain the basic tenets of self-determination theory and how it impacts individual psychological empowerment and dynamic performance. Third, I leverage research on situational leadership theory (Hersey et al., 1979; Fiedler, 1964) and LMX theory (Dansereau et al., 1975) to introduce the concept of differentiated empowering leadership. Furthermore, using social comparison theory, I introduce the concept of empowering leadership-social comparison. With that in mind, the fourth part of this chapter explains the details of social comparison theory. Finally, I use an integrative lens of SDT and social comparison theory to develop a multilevel process model of how differentiated empowering leadership negatively impacts individual- and team-level dynamic performance. As an aside, throughout the chapter I provide additional literature review information in Appendix A, which is noted by endnotes.

#### **Empowering Leadership**

As a form of socio-structural empowerment<sup>i</sup>, empowering leadership has been conceptualized and operationalized in a variety of ways (Ahearne et al., 2005; Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Blanchard, Carlos, & Randolph, 1995; Kim & Yukl, 1995; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000; Pearce & Sims, 2002). For this study, I leverage Kirkman and Rosen's (1999) conceptualization of empowering

leadership – the extent to which a leader’s behaviors consist of promoting self-directed and autonomous work, delegating responsibilities, seeking participative advice, encouraging high expectations, and expressing confidence – for two reasons. First, being that empowering leadership was initially developed as a team-level form of leadership (Arnold et al., 2000; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999), some conceptualizations are primarily focused toward empowering teams (see Arnold et al., 2000), rather than individuals. However, the set of behaviors used by Kirkman and Rosen (1999) can be applied to either the team as a whole or individual team members (similar to Ahearne et al., 2005; Pearce & Sims, 2002). This is important because in this study I investigate the effects of differentiated empowering leadership, which entails analyzing how the leader uniquely empowers each team member (Chan, 1998).

Second, Kirkman and Rosen’s (1999) conceptualization entails the most comprehensive set of leader behaviors that actually transfer power to and instill confidence in individual employees, thus enabling them to lead themselves in a dynamic way. Conger and Kanungo (1988) noted two ways in which leaders empower or “enable” their employees to dynamically cope with environmental demands (e.g., adaptive performance) and initiate change (e.g., proactive performance). The first way leaders confer power to their employees is by doing any of the following: 1) delegating responsibilities and authority to them (Burke, 1986; Leach, Wall, & Jackson, 2003), 2) giving them autonomy to act independently or without supervision (Kanter, 1979; Spreitzer, 1995), or 3) giving them opportunities to participate in making team decisions (Burke, 1986; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; House, 1988; Kanter, 1983). Each of these

behaviors provides employees with some form of “enabling” power, whether that be in the form of authority over tasks, control over work methods and goals, or influence on team decisions and problem solving. The second way leaders empower their employees is by enhancing their self-perceived competence or augmenting their confidence in their abilities to perform at a high level (Bandura, 1977; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Conger and Kanungo (1988) explicitly noted that leaders can develop their subordinates’ self-perceived competence by “expressing confidence in subordinates accompanied by high performance expectations (Burke, 1986; Neilsen, 1986)” (p. 478).

Collectively, when leaders simultaneously transfer power to their employees using these two tactics, they provide the external (e.g., authority, control, and participation) and internal (e.g. cognitive confidence) power necessary for individuals to lead themselves toward proactive and adaptive performance. Of the most commonly used conceptualizations and operationalizations of empowering leadership (Ahearne et al., 2005; Arnold et al., 2000; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Pearce & Sims, 2002), Kirkman and Rosen’s (1999) is the only one that entails the delegation of responsibilities<sup>ii</sup>. Furthermore, it consists of the broadest scope of control conferred upon individuals by including three unique forms of autonomy. As a result, it most comprehensively captures all of the components of empowering leadership by including delegating responsibilities to employees, giving employees autonomy (decision-making autonomy, problem-solving autonomy, and goal-setting autonomy), asking employees for advice in decision making, encouraging employees to strive for high performance, and displaying confidence in the employees.

With an understanding of what empowering leadership entails, it is important to differentiate it from other forms of supportive leadership. Empowering leadership is related to leader-member exchange (LMX) in that it is also a form of supportive leadership, but it differs in that LMX refers to the two-way quality of relationship between a leader and employee characterized by mutual trust, respect, and obligation and does not entail any specific leader behaviors (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Unlike LMX, empowering leadership entails specific leader behaviors focused toward an individual meant to specifically increase the individual's motivation by providing him or her with power (Chen et al., 2007; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Accordingly, it is possible for an employee to report having a high quality LMX relationship with a leader that is highly autocratic (i.e., not empowering; Martin et al., 2013; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). In addition, leaders may give task and decision-making autonomy to individuals with whom they have low quality relationships, because they perceive them as competent. Finally, Hassan, Mahsud, Yukl, and Prussia (2013) provided empirical evidence using confirmatory factor analysis that LMX and empowering leadership are distinct leadership constructs.

Empowering leadership also differs from transformational leadership, with the latter consisting of intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, idealized influence, and inspirational motivation (Bass, 1985; Kark & Shamir, 2002; Wu et al., 2010). Similar to LMX, leaders can exhibit transformational leadership behaviors without transferring any power or control to their employees (Bass, 1997; Martin et al., 2013; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015), which is the fundamental premise of empowering

leadership (Ahearne et al., 2005; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Pearce & Sims, 2002). For example, transformational leaders set their own vision or goals and use their idealized influence and individualized consideration to actively sell them to employees and motivate them to go above and beyond to accomplish the leaders' goals. In contrast, empowering leaders motivate superior performance by giving their employees power or control over making and accomplishing their own goals. Along those lines, Pearce and Sims (2002) measured both forms of leadership and empirically found that the provision of autonomy or independent action is what sets empowering leadership apart from transformational leadership. Furthermore, confirmatory factor analysis on the two constructs provides additional discriminant validity, thus revealing that these two forms of leadership are empirically unique (Pearce, Sims, Cox, Ball, Schnell, Smith, & Trevino, 2003)<sup>iii</sup>.

### **Proactive and Adaptive Performance**

A key purpose of this study is to investigate the processes through which empowering leadership impacts two forms of dynamic performance, specifically, proactive and adaptive performance at the team and individual levels of analysis. I focus on proactive performance because theoretically SDT contends that individuals that experience higher levels of psychological empowerment take greater ownership in their responsibilities, which makes them more likely to exhibit proactive, change-focused performance (Strauss & Parker, 2014). Proactive performance is focused on individuals or teams engaging in self-starting, future-oriented actions to change their work



situations, their work roles, or themselves or the team (Griffin et al., 2007). According to Williams et al. (2010), team and individual proactive performance are likely homologous (see Chen, Bliese, & Mathieu, 2005; Siebert et al., 2011), but no research has validated that notion due to insufficient research on team proactive performance. Examples of individual proactive performance are expressing voice (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), proactively solving problems and implementing ideas (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006), and taking charge (Parker & Collins, 2010).

Although adaptive performance is also a form of dynamic performance, it is a distinct form of performance that is geared toward individuals and teams coping with, responding to, and/or supporting changes or threats that influence the individual's or team's work roles (Griffin et al., 2007). I focus on adaptive performance because SDT also suggests that psychologically empowered individuals are more persistent, cognitively flexible, and superior problem solvers, which allows them to be more adaptive to changes and challenges that they experience (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Grant & Berry, 2011; Johnson, 2003; Kozlowski et al., 2009; Pulakos et al., 2000; Shalley et al., 2004). Similar to proactive performance, there is little empirical research on team adaptive performance, thus there is insufficient evidence as to its homology between individual- and team-levels of analysis.

Beyond the theoretical rationale for including proactive and adaptive performance in my model, I intend to analyze the effects of empowering leadership on both proactive and adaptive performance, because the two outcomes are aligned with one another in that when individuals and teams initiate change (i.e., exhibit proactive

performance), they inherently need to effectively cope with and respond to those proposed changes (i.e., exhibit adaptive performance). Subsequently, both forms of dynamic performance are critical in today's highly complex and uncertain environment (Burke et al., 2006; Griffin et al., 2007; Kozlowski, Gully, Nason, & Smith, 1999; Williams et al., 2010). With that said, both forms of dynamic performance are unique from task proficiency or task performance in that they are not formally specified in a job description (Murphy & Jackson, 1999). According to Griffin et al., (2007), dynamic performance is particularly relevant in settings that boast high interdependence and uncertainty (see also Johnson, 2003), because both settings limit the extent to which work roles can be effectively formalized and assessed. Griffin et al. (2007) used confirmatory factor analysis to show that the three forms of individual performance (e.g., task proficiency, adaptability, and proactivity) are fundamentally distinct.

### **Self-determination Theory**

A central theory used to understand the motivational effects of empowering leadership on proactive and adaptive performance is SDT. SDT is founded on the organismic perspective of human nature and motivation (Angyal, 1941; Goldstein, 1939; Rogers, 1961), which argues that individuals are innately motivated to enhance their abilities and skills, connect with others, and ultimately realize or achieve their highest potential. SDT postulates that individuals' innate desire to grow and develop is facilitated by the fulfillment of three universal<sup>iv</sup> psychological needs, specifically the need for *autonomy* (need to be self-regulating, the maker, or owner of their choices),

*competence* (need to be effective in one's tasks, mastering current skills and developing new skills in the process), and *relatedness* ("need to be close to, trusting of, caring for, and cared for by others" (Deci & Ryan, 2012, p. 421; Sheldon et al., 2003)). SDT asserts that individuals' psychological needs are satisfied or thwarted by environmental stimuli. In a work setting SDT researchers have predominantly searched to understand what environmental stimuli (e.g., intrapersonal-, social-, or task-related) fulfill or thwart individuals' psychological needs and thus enhance or detract from individuals' intrinsic impulse to be more proactive, improvement-focused, persistent, creative, and flexible (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Martin et al., 2013; Sheldon, Turban, Brown, Barrick, & Judge, 2003). SDT scholars have found that the more individuals' organizational setting fulfills their psychological needs, the more individuals internalize their roles and are intrinsically motivated to advocate improvement-focused change and persist through change (i.e., be proactive and adaptable; Deci & Ryan, 2012; Raub & Roberts, 2010; Ryan, Bernstein, & Brown, 2010; Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser, & Deci, 1996).

SDT scholars have theorized and empirically validated that managerial behaviors are environmental social stimuli that can either satisfy or thwart the fulfillment of employees' psychological needs and thus augment their psychological empowerment (Baard, Deci, & Ryan, 2004; Deci & Ryan, 2012; Gagne, 2009; Hu & Liden, 2011; Sheldon et al., 2003). Along those lines, extensive research indicates that empowering leadership behaviors positively predict psychological empowerment (Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Chen et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2011; Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Deci & Ryan, 2012; Raub & Roberts, 2010; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). For example,

empowering leaders fulfill employees' need for autonomy by giving them control over how they complete their tasks, set goals, and solve problems. They also fulfill subordinates' need for competence by delegating responsibilities to them and expressing confidence in their abilities to perform at a high level (Bandura, 1997). Finally, empowering leaders satisfy subordinates' need for relatedness by trusting them with additional responsibilities and regularly asking for their advice when making decisions. As a result, empowering leadership is an appealing form of leadership to receive, because it allows employees to intrinsically enjoy their work.

With that in mind, past studies have limited their analyses by not considering the social context of receiving empowering leadership. For example, studies that have analyzed the individual-focused empowering leadership-psychological empowerment relationship (Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Zhang & Bartol, 2010) have analyzed the phenomenon as if it exists in a vacuum by not considering the social contexts that inherently exist in a social work environment, especially where there is differential treatment (Colquitt et al., 2005; Greenberg et al., 2007; Molleman et al., 2007). This is a critical shortcoming, because social comparison theory argues that when individuals are differentially treated, they spontaneously compare themselves to the others involved based on that differential treatment (Gilbert et al., 1995; Wood, 1996). While scholars have partially considered the impact of the social context by analyzing how team-level empowering leadership impacts psychological empowerment (Chen et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2011; Raub & Roberts, 2010), they have assumed that empowering leadership is applied homogenously across the team, overlooking the potential social comparison

effects that might impact individual motivation when team members see one another being differentially empowered by their leader. As a result, past research has yet to reveal the full effects of empowering leadership on individual psychological empowerment.

### **Differentiated Empowering Leadership**

By averaging the team members' perceptions of their leader's individual-focused empowering leadership to create team-level empowering leadership (i.e., requiring team consensus), the team leadership literature has predominantly assumed that leaders behave homogenously toward team members (Chan, 1998; Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). Although this approach has shown to be fruitful by revealing the effects of leadership on a variety of team and individual outcomes (Barling, Christie, & Hopton, 2011), it assumes that leaders espouse a "one size fits all" perspective and behave equally across all team members (Chen et al., 2007; Forrester, 2000; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). While there are recent studies that have begun to unpack the effects of differential leadership within teams (Dansear et al., 2008; Nielsen & Daniels, 2012; Wang & Howell, 2010; Wu et al., 2010; Zhang, Li, Ullrich, & van Dick, 2015), they are limited to LMX and individualized transformational leadership, which are strongly focused on the relational side of leadership<sup>v</sup> (see Henderson et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2005; Wu et al., 2010). In contrast, empowering leadership focuses less on leader-subordinate relationships and more on motivating those that are able to perform independently with enhanced power to do so with minimal supervision (via autonomy, responsibilities, participation, and

confidence; see Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Pearce & Sims, 2002). As a result, our understanding of the team-level and cross-level effects of leaders differentially distributing autonomy and responsibilities among team members (i.e., differentiated empowering leadership) is unknown. In turn, we do not know how the social context of empowering leadership might impact team dynamics and cross-level individual motivation, which are critical antecedents to team and individual adaptability and proactivity (Burke et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2011; Pulakos et al., 2000; Williams et al., 2010).

Regarding empowering leadership, Forrester (2000) argues that such leadership attempts often fail due to taking a “one-size-fits all empowerment approach” that does not differentiate among team members’ capabilities. Furthermore, other scholars have argued that empowerment is “a matter of degree rather than an absolute,” articulating that team leaders differentially evaluate which team members to empower and to what extent (Ford & Fottler, 2005, p. 22). For example, numerous studies have validated the concept of empowering leadership as a dyadic phenomenon between a supervisor and individual employee (Ahearne et al., 2005; Harris et al., 2014; Raub & Roberts, 2012; Robert, Probst, Martocchio, Drasgow, & Lawler, 2000; Zhang & Bartol, 2010), which suggests that differentiated empowering leadership exists within teams.

Fiedler (1967) and Hersey and colleagues’ (1979) situational leadership theory contrasts the one size fits all perspective of leadership by originally proposing that the most effective form of leadership entails gradually increasing the amount of autonomy and responsibilities employees receive from their leader based on the employee’s

maturity or ability to effectively work autonomously (i.e., a contingency approach to leadership). They specifically argued that as employees mature in their competence and abilities to be autonomous employees, leaders should transition from *telling* the employees what they need to do (i.e., this is highly directive or not empowering), to *selling* the employee on how to fulfill their responsibilities (implies slightly more autonomy), to *participating* or recognizing the employee's abilities to complete their tasks with limited supervisor support, to finally *delegating* or giving complete autonomy to the employee to perform assigned tasks (i.e., most similar to empowering leadership). Inherently, situational leadership theory argues that the most effective form of leadership is one in which leaders vary or differentially bestow autonomy and support to their employees. Although researchers have found mixed support for situational leadership theory (Hambleton & Gumpert, 1982; Norris & Vecchio, 1992; Vecchio, 1987), researchers and practitioners have never refuted that supervisors often bestow differential levels of autonomy and responsibility upon their subordinates. In fact, situational leadership theory continues to be advocated for among practitioners and taught within the academic classroom (see Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, 2015). Nevertheless, leadership scholars have refrained from analyzing how this variance with regards to giving autonomy and responsibilities (i.e., empowering leadership) affects team and individual-level processes and outcomes. This is a critical shortcoming, because it limits us from understanding the social comparison effects of differential empowering leadership on team and individual dynamic performance, in addition to the

multilevel interplay of within-team individual-focused empowering leadership across levels.

As a result, differentiated empowering leadership – defined as the extent to which a leader uniquely empowers each individual subordinate – directly opposes the commonly assumed “one size fits all” leadership perspective, as it is grounded in situational leadership theories (Fiedler, 1967; Hersey et al., 1979) as well as social exchange theory’s concept of LMX (e.g., Dansereau et al., 1975). These theories postulate that effective leaders espouse unique behaviors and relationships among individual employees on the basis of employees’ individual attributes (e.g., competence, social abilities) and contextual factors (e.g., resources, task structures). In differentiated leadership, the influence target is not on the team as a whole (using direct consensus or referent shift), but each individual team member (Chan, 1998). Therefore, a high level of differentiated empowering leadership indicates that each subordinate receives a unique level of empowering leadership from the leader. For example, high levels of differentiated empowering leadership entails giving augmented task autonomy to some team members relative to others, delegating more authority and responsibilities to certain team members compared to other team members, asking some team members for their advice more than other team members, and/or encouraging higher performance from some team members relative to others. However, low differentiated leadership suggests that leaders behave uniformly across all of their subordinates, indicated by delegating authority, asking for participation, giving autonomy, and encouraging high performance equally across team members. In an extensive study that entailed a multifaceted research



design, Yukl (1999) found preliminary support of differentiated empowering leadership by finding that leaders delegated more authority to employees that they deemed as more competent, perceived as espousing more goal congruence, and perceived as having more favorable relationships. Leana (1986) and Ahearne et al. (2005) also discovered that supervisors gave differential levels of control or autonomy and delegation to their subordinates providing additional support for the idea of differentiated empowering leadership.

### **Social Comparison Theory**

Being that leaders differentially empower their subordinates, I assert that empowering leadership is a socially available form of information or feedback among team members that can be used to evaluate one's competence, abilities, and value vis-à-vis other team members through social comparisons. Social comparisons are defined as "the process of thinking about information about one or more people in relation to the self" (Wood, 1996, p. 521) and they are impactful drivers of individuals' attitudes, aspirations, and behaviors (Wood, 1989). According to social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), individuals have an inherent drive to evaluate their relative competence, abilities, and value to others that are close to them (e.g., their team members). Festinger (1954) also theorized that individuals have a natural drive to be better than or superior to others that are close to them. As a result, individuals inherently evaluate their competence, abilities, and value in social settings by comparing themselves with others based on socially available information in order to learn how to

better adapt, change, and ultimately enhance themselves (see Buunk & Gibbons, 2007; Buunk & Mussweiler, 2001; Gilbert et al., 1995).

Research has identified a variety of socially available comparison dimensions that individuals use to evaluate their competence, abilities, and value relative to others (see Wood, 1989). For example, organizational scholars have found that individuals evaluate themselves by socially comparing their performance with that of other work group members (Kim & Glomb, 2014). In addition, social comparisons based on leader-employee relationship qualities (i.e., LMX) have been shown to directly predict individuals' task performance and prosocial citizenship behaviors (Vidyarthi et al., 2010). Past research that is centrally founded on social comparison theory (see Adams, 1965; Colquitt et al., 2005; Crosby, 1984; Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; 2001; Greenberg et al., 2007) suggests that when individuals within a group experience differentiated treatment, social comparisons regarding that treatment become more salient. Therefore, when leaders differentially empower their unique team members, the differential treatment stimulates evaluative social comparisons among team members with regards to the level of empowering leadership received by each team member (see Colquitt et al., 2005; Greenberg et al., 2007; Wood, 1996).

### **Hypothesis Development**

With a recognition that (a) empowering leadership can be exhibited differentially toward different subordinates, and (b) this differential treatment stimulates social comparison processes among team members, next I transition to theoretically explain

how differentiated empowering leadership triggers three unique processes at different levels of analysis. Initially, I focus on the cross-level effects of differentiated empowering leadership by explaining how differentiated empowering leadership influences team member dynamic performance through empowering leadership-social comparisons and individual psychological empowerment. From there, I articulate how and when differentiated empowering leadership impacts team dynamic performance. Finally, I highlight another cross-level process through which differentiated empowering leadership impacts individual psychological empowerment through team relationship conflict.

A central purpose of this study is to propose and test an integrated multilevel model of how empowering leadership spans levels to impact individuals' proactive and adaptive performance. With this in mind, I posit that differentiated empowering leadership influences the extent to which individuals engage in empowering leadership-social comparisons (defined as the comparison between the level of empowering leadership one receives from a leader to the level of empowering leadership that one's coworkers receive) among team members. There are two primary reasons for this. First, social comparison theorists note that "when people stumble upon social information, they *automatically* compare themselves" to evaluate their competence and relative standing against their social referents (Wood, 1996, p. 523); moreover, this is done with very little effort (Gilbert et al., 1995). Thus, although oftentimes individuals purposefully make social comparisons (Wood, 1989), when differentiated social information is available, research suggests that individuals immediately make social

comparisons regardless of whether it is purposeful or desirable (e.g., Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Wood, 1996). Because teams inherently entail some level of task interdependence (Kozlowski & Bell, 2003; Salas, Dickinson, Converse, & Tannenbaum, 1992), team members regularly see and talk about how the leader treats each team member. As a result, differentiated empowering leadership behavior is a highly accessible form of socially available information that team members can use to make intra-team social comparisons about one another's competence, abilities, and value to the team (Greenberg et al., 2007; Molleman et al., 2007).

Second, empowering leadership behaviors are behavioral signals exhibited by leaders that indicate that they perceive certain team members as more (or less) competent, able, or valuable (Spence, 1973; 2002); this is because the leader perceives some team members as more trustworthy and able to effectively manage themselves and additional responsibilities with minimal supervision and direction if he or she empowers them more. In fact, Yukl (1999) provided evidence of this when they found that leaders differentially delegate tasks to employees based upon their perception of the employees' competence and leader-employee goal congruence. Thus, the team members that are empowered by their leaders (and those team members that are not empowered by their leaders) perceive their differentiated leaders' behaviors as a form of top-down behavioral feedback regarding their own and one another's competence, abilities, and value to the team. Accordingly, when leaders differentially empower team members, the team members use empowering leadership as a comparison dimension or point of comparison to evaluate their competence, abilities, and value relative to other team members.

Inversely, when leaders empower their subordinates equally or homogenously, then social comparisons on that dimension are minimized (Colquitt et al., 2005; Greenberg et al., 2007), because there is no social cue or information that indicates differences in competence, abilities, or value (Gilbert et al., 1995). As a result, the more the team leader engages in differential empowering leadership, the more team members engage in empowering leadership-social comparisons. Thus, I propose:

**Hypothesis 1:** Differentiated empowering leadership is positively related to the extent to which team members perceive that they receive more or less empowering leadership than their other team members (i.e., empowering leadership-social comparison).

Although Hypothesis 1 is focused on “the extent” to which empowering leadership-social comparison are engaged in, the following hypotheses transition to understand how individuals respond to receiving more or less empowering leadership from their team leader, relative to other team members. Applying the integrative lens of SDT and social comparison theory, I contend that because perceptions of team members’ received empowering leadership institute a lens for evaluative judgment by individuals of their relative standing in a team (Wood, 1996), one’s perceived empowering leadership standing in a team can impact the fulfillment of one’s psychological needs and thus one’s psychological empowerment. According to SDT, social environmental factors (e.g., rewards or feedback) either satisfy one’s psychological needs or thwart them, which either positively or negatively impacts one’s psychological empowerment and subsequent behaviors (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Specifically, SDT suggests that any

type of environmental feedback or “competence information” impacts an individual’s perceived competence and any type of perceived effort to control someone impacts an individual’s perceived autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2012, p. 418). In turn, these perceptions impact the extent to which individuals experience psychological empowerment. As previously noted, the extent to which leaders empower their team members is a behavioral form of feedback that signals leaders' perceptions of each team member's competence, abilities, and value to the team (Yukl, 1999). Thus, as team members contrast the amount of empowering leadership they receive to that of other team members (i.e., empowering leadership-social comparisons), the social comparison information becomes a form of positive or negative feedback with regards to their competence, abilities, and value to the team.

As such, assessing one’s relative standing in a team based on one’s received empowering leadership (i.e., empowering leadership-social comparisons) can be a particularly potent form of socially available information that satisfies or thwarts the fulfillment of one’s psychological needs (see Wood, 1989). For example, when individuals perceive that relative to other team members they are being delegated more tasks, given more autonomy, asked for more advice, and encouraged to perform more highly by their team leader, then their desire to be better than others is satisfied (Festinger, 1954) and they perceive themselves as more competent and more in control of their work. This is because their perceived superiority with regards to received empowering leadership is a form of positive feedback from their leader that validates their competence due to the fact that others are receiving less empowering leadership

than them. In addition, the relative differences they perceive in autonomy received further satisfies their need for autonomy, because they perceive that others are being more controlled by the leader than they are. As a result, those that perceive themselves as receiving more empowering leadership compared to their team members will experience more psychological empowerment (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Sheldon et al., 2003).

Inversely, when individuals perceive that relative to other team members they are delegated fewer tasks, given less autonomy, and rarely asked for advice or encouraged to perform highly by their supervisor, the comparison information undermines the fulfillment of their psychological needs. This is because receiving less empowering leadership than others is a form of negative feedback, which thwarts individuals' perception that they can perform their roles effectively, thus reducing individuals' psychological empowerment (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). In addition, negative emotional arousal states such as anxiety, stress, or depression result in reduced perceived competence (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Along these lines, social comparison scholars have found that when individuals view themselves as inferior on a social dimension, they experience enhanced levels of depression and discouragement (Beck, 1967; Gilbert, 1992; Smith, Parrott, Ozer, & Moniz, 1994), shame (Gilbert, 1992; Lewis, 1992), and envy (Smith & Kim, 2007), which thwart one's need for competence and reduces one's psychological empowerment (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Finally, the contrast effect of perceiving that others are receiving more autonomy than oneself also drives those that are less empowered to perceive themselves as being more controlled by

their supervisor, thus undermining their need for autonomy and reducing psychological empowerment. Preliminary evidence indicates that individuals that perceive themselves as superior relative to others on a comparison dimension report increased self-esteem, while those that perceive themselves as inferior report reduced self-esteem (Wood, 1989). Based on the previously stated rationale, I argue that:

**Hypothesis 2:** Team member empowering leadership-social comparison is positively related to psychological empowerment, such that individuals that perceive they are receiving more empowering leadership than their other team members (i.e., high empowering leadership-social comparison) will experience higher psychological empowerment, whereas, individuals that perceive they are receiving less empowering leadership than their other team members (i.e., low empowering leadership-social comparison) will experience lower psychological empowerment. This relationship exists above and beyond the direct effects of individual empowering leadership, LMX, and LMX social comparisons.

**Hypothesis 3:** Team-level differentiated empowering leadership has an indirect effect on individual psychological empowerment through individual empowering leadership-social comparison, above and beyond the effects of individual empowering leadership, LMX, and LMX social comparison.

In line with SDT (Gagne & Deci, 2005), Spreitzer (1995) argued that psychologically empowered individuals are “likely to proactively execute their job responsibilities” (p. 1448; see also Martin et al., 2013; Raub & Roberts, 2010). Bindl and Parker (2010) noted that proactive behaviors are founded on the notion of “taking



control of a situation in a self-directed and future-focused way” in order to instigate change-oriented improvements toward one’s situation or one’s self (p. 567). Since psychologically empowered individuals are not constrained by supervisory instructions and organizational rules (Choi, 2007; Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990), they possess augmented control over their work methods and goals, allowing them to proactively seek out challenges that extend their capacities and roles (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990). Parker et al., (2006) validated this notion by finding that autonomy directly and indirectly impacts proactive work behavior. Furthermore, Kim, Cable, Kim, and Wang (2009) discovered that autonomy interacts with emotional competence to impact individual proactivity.

Partly founded upon the job characteristics literature, Parker, Wall, and Jackson (1997) theorized that possessing a wide array of responsibilities or tasks sets the stage for proactive behaviors. This is because individuals with more role responsibilities are more likely to see broader problems, which results in their recognizing the value of proactive behaviors (Parker, 2000). In contrast, those with more simplified, restricted responsibilities likely espouse a more narrow and passive “that’s not my job” perspective, resulting in less proactive behaviors. Thus, when empowering leaders give their employees more authority and responsibilities, the employees feel a broader sense of ownership and concern for those diverse responsibilities, which motivates them to proactively improve that which is under their stewardship. Accordingly, Parker et al. (2006) revealed that giving wider role responsibilities to employees promotes self-rated proactive behaviors.

Another characteristic of proactive behaviors is that they are inherently risky, because they require individuals to challenge the status quo of the leader and/or the organization (Chiaburu, Smith, Wang, & Zimmerman, 2014; Parker & Collins, 2010; Raub & Roberts, 2010). As a result, believing that one is capable to succeed (i.e., perceived competence) is critical for an individual to challenge the status quo or exhibit proactive behaviors (Parker et al., 2010), because of the high potential for social and psychological backlash attached to challenging accepted organizational norms (Bindl & Parker, 2010). Furthermore, more competent individuals set higher goals for themselves, which oftentimes requires them to initiate change to attain these goals (Bandura, 1997). There is extensive evidence that perceived competence leads to individual proactivity (Bandura, 1986; 1997). For example, a longitudinal study by Frese, Garst, and Fay (2007) revealed that individuals that reported higher competence (in addition to opportunity control) exhibited higher levels of self-initiative at later points in time. Additional research indicates that role-breadth self-efficacy, or one's perceived competence to carry out an array of proactive, interpersonal, and integrative activities (Parker, 1998), also leads to voice and taking charge (Parker & Collins, 2010), problem solving and idea implementation (Parker et al., 2006), and individual, team member, and organization member proactivity (Griffin et al., 2007). Furthermore, there is also evidence that psychologically empowered individuals exhibit more challenging behaviors (Raub & Roberts, 2010). Thus, I propose the following:

**Hypothesis 4:** Team member psychological empowerment is positively related to team member proactive performance.

**Hypothesis 5:** Team member empowering leadership-social comparison is indirectly related to individual proactive performance through psychological empowerment, such that team members that perceive they are receiving more empowering leadership than their other team members will experience more psychological empowerment and thus more proactive performance. Inversely, individuals that perceive they are receiving less empowering leadership than their other team members will experience less psychological empowerment and thus less proactive performance.

SDT suggests that social stimuli (i.e., empowering leadership-social comparisons) indirectly impact team members behaviors through individual psychological empowerment (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Gagne & Deci, 2005), such as adaptive performance – defined as the extent to which individuals cope with, respond to, and/or support changes or challenges with regards to their individual roles or tasks (Griffin et al., 2007, p. 331; Roth, Assor, Niemiec, & Ryan, 2009). For example, if an engineer were to cope well with a new job assignment, new technology, or role constraint, then he or she would be exhibiting adaptive performance. Psychologically empowered individuals are more adaptive for at least three reasons. First, individuals that believe in their abilities (i.e., more competent) are more likely to muster greater sustained effort and persistence compared to those that doubt their abilities or dwell on their personal inadequacies (Bandura, 1986; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). As a result, highly competent individuals are able to cope with changes and adjust easier than those that invest less resources into adapting to changes or threats. Second, individuals that

have control over their situations are less likely to negatively respond to threats and changes when they occur, because they have a sense of ownership and are able to act independently of their supervisor, giving them the needed flexibility to adapt to challenges or changes without needing to consult with their supervisor (see Scott & Bruce, 1994). Finally, psychologically empowered individuals are intrinsically energized by their work roles; thus, they exhibit deeper conceptual learning and enhanced cognitive flexibility (Gagne & Deci, 2005; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987; Johnson, 2003; Pulakos et al., 2000). As a result, when they experience changes or threats, their stronger conceptual understanding of their role allows them to adjust quicker and with less expended energy.

Preliminary research suggests that psychologically empowered individuals are more adaptive. For example, Kozlowski, Gully, Brown, Salas, Smith, and Nason (2001) found that highly competent individuals exhibit enhanced learning and adaptive performance (see also Pulakos, Schmitt, Dorsey, Arad, Borman, & Hedge, 2002). Research also indicates that individuals report enhanced career adaptability when their leaders provide them with autonomy and opportunities to participate in decision-making (Ito & Brotheridge 2005; Gist & Mitchell, 2002). Furthermore, Roth et al. (2009) found that perceived volition and choice mediates the relationship between autonomous support (similar to empowering leadership) and effective regulation of one's emotions. Thus, as individuals effectively regulate their positive and negative emotions, they have an enhanced capacity to prevent their negative emotions from overwhelming them, allowing them to use their negative emotions as "guides for adaptive behavior" (Roth et

al., 2009, p. 1121). Finally, recently Chen et al. (2011) found that psychological empowerment influenced individual creativity, which is a dimension of adaptive performance (see Johnson, 2003; Pulokas et al., 2000). Based on the preceding arguments and empirical findings, I posit the following:

**Hypothesis 6:** Team member psychological empowerment is positively related to individual adaptive performance.

**Hypothesis 7:** Team member empowering leadership-social comparison is indirectly related to individual adaptive performance through psychological empowerment, such that team members that perceive they are receiving more empowering leadership than their other team members will experience more psychological empowerment and thus more adaptive performance. Inversely, individuals that perceive they are receiving less empowering leadership than their other team members will experience less psychological empowerment and thus less adaptive performance.

Through the integrative lens of SDT and social comparison theory, I expect that differentiated empowering leadership generates team relationship conflict (defined as tension, annoyance, and animosity among team members; Chen et al., 2011), which subsequently reduces team proactive and adaptive performance. Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory argues that individuals have an inherent drive to evaluate their competence or abilities in order to adapt, change, and improve their performance (see Buunk & Gibbons, 2007; Buunk & Mussweiler, 2001; Gilbert et al., 1995). A central tenet of social comparison theory is that environmental factors (e.g., differentiated

empowering leadership) stimulate social comparisons among team members, which impacts their interpersonal relationships – indicated in this study as within-team relationship conflict – and subsequent ability to function effectively (Festinger, 1954; Jones & Gerard, 1967). As discussed previously, when individuals experience differential treatment, social comparisons become more salient with regards to that treatment (Colquitt et al., 2005; Gilbert et al., 1995; Greenberg et al., 2007; Wood, 1996). As a result, when leaders differentially empower unique team members, the treatment stimulates social comparisons among the team regarding each member's competence, abilities, and value to the leader and team.

A vast portion of social comparison theory is focused on who individuals socially compare themselves against (Wood, 1989). Because individuals use social comparisons to assess their competence, abilities, and value relative to others based on comparison dimensions, individuals can either engage in upward comparisons (Festinger, 1954; Molleman et al., 2007) or downward comparisons (Wills, 1981). Upward comparisons are when individuals compare themselves to individuals that they perceive are higher or better than them with regards to the comparison dimension (Festinger, 1954; Molleman et al., 2007). For example, individuals that engage in upward comparisons perceive themselves as receiving less empowering leadership than other team members, thus viewing themselves as “inferior” with regards to empowering leadership. Inversely, downward comparisons are when individuals compare themselves to others that they perceive as being lower or worse with regards to the comparison dimension (Wills, 1981). For example, individuals that engage in downward comparisons perceive

themselves as receiving more empowering leadership than other team members, thus viewing themselves as “superior” with regards to empowering leadership (Molleman et al., 2007; Wills, 1981).

Festinger (1954) posits that when it comes to socially comparing dimensions related to competence, abilities, or value – of which empowering leadership behaviors are signals of (see Spence, 2002; Yukl, 1999) – individuals are naturally inclined to engage in upward comparisons instead of downward comparisons (Wilson & Benner, 1971). There are two reasons for this. First, if individuals have a range of possible referent others to choose from, there is evidence that they choose to compare themselves with those that are closer to themselves when it comes to the dimension of comparison (Wheeler, Shaver, Jones, Goethals, Cooper, Robinson, Gruder, & Butzine, 1969; Wood, 1989). With that noted, the self-awareness research is replete with evidence that shows that individuals lack self-awareness with regards to how competent they are and how well they perform (Alicke & Govorun, 2005; Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004). In addition, the social comparison literature shows that most individuals are self-biased in that they view themselves as better than objective evidence indicates (Festinger, 1954; Greenwald, 1980; Taylor & Brown, 1988). As a result, individuals’ lack of self-awareness and exaggerated self-perceptions of their competence drives them to compare themselves to the top performers within their sphere of influence, which results in far more upward-focused social comparisons than downward-focused comparisons. Not only do they engage in more upward social comparisons, but they make them against

those that receive the highest levels of empowering leadership from the team leader (Kim & Glomb, 2014; Lam et al., 2011).

Second, Festinger notes that Western society promotes and rewards enhanced competence and performance; thus, individuals are encouraged (and culturally incentivized) to select those that are perceived as the most competent and valuable to be their “standard setter” (see Feldman & Ruble, 1981; Goethals, 1986; Goethals & Darley, 1977). Because the team members that receive more empowering leadership are given enhanced voice in team decision-making and more impactful responsibilities, in addition to more encouragement and confidence to perform at a high level, they are likely to be the higher profile individuals within the team and are more readily perceived by other team members to be more competent and valuable to the team. Thus, they are more visible and attractive in the eyes of other team members, which results in increased upward-driven social comparisons among those that receive less empowering leadership (Weick, 1995).

Social comparison theory argues that perceiving oneself as inferior to someone else with regards to a comparison dimension – in other words perceiving that one is receiving less empowering leadership than one’s team members – drives oneself to engage in one of three potential behaviors. The first behavior is constructive, in that individuals could seek to constructively learn from their team members that are receiving more empowering leadership in an attempt to reduce the discrepancy one perceives exists between the amount of empowering leadership one receives relative to close others. The second behavior is more destructive, in that individuals could attempt



to refrain from making the unfavorable social comparisons by withdrawing from or seeking to avoid associating with those that receive more empowering leadership than them. The third behavior is the most destructive, in that individuals could seek to reduce the perceived discrepancy with regards to empowering leadership by destructively seeking to derogate or undermine those that they perceive are receiving more empowering leadership than them (for a review see Wood, 1989).

There are three central factors that drive whether individuals respond constructively versus destructively (i.e., withdrawing from or derogating their coworkers) to upward social comparisons. First, the closer the social comparison dimension (e.g., empowering leadership received) is to individuals' self-definition, the more they are driven to compete and socially compare themselves on that dimension (Festinger, 1954; Forsyth, 2000; Lockwood & Kunda, 1997). Beyond that, research indicates that the more central the social comparison dimension is to individuals' self-definition, the more damaging it is to the individuals' self-evaluations when they perceive that they are inferior with regards to that social comparison dimension (Tesser, 1988). This is because individuals have an innate drive to be slightly better than those that are around them with regards to things that are central to their individual self-definitions (Festinger, 1954). As a result, Tesser (1988) argues that when individuals perceive themselves as inferior on dimensions that are central to their self-definitions, they engage in contrast-based social comparison processes that result in lower self-evaluations and the perception of the superior referent as threatening to their self-esteem (see Festinger, 1954). These negative evaluations and threats increase the likelihood of

individuals' responding to upward social comparisons with destructive behavioral responses (Li & Liao, 2014; Tesser, 1988). Inversely, when the social comparison dimension is not important or central to one's self-definition, then theory suggests that individuals engage in reflection-based social comparisons by viewing "the successful performance of a close person [as] mirrored in oneself," which results in an improvement of one's self-evaluation (Li & Liao, 2014, p. 3) and an increased likelihood of a constructive behavioral response to the unfavorable social comparison.

Along these lines, SDT argues that everyone possesses a universal need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness<sup>1</sup> (Bandura, 1977; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Deci & Ryan, 2012; Gagne & Deci, 2005). While LMX primarily satisfies individuals' need for relatedness, research indicates that empowering leadership particularly satisfies individuals' needs for competence and autonomy (see Baard et al., 2004; Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Martin et al., 2013; Raub & Roberts, 2010). Being that empowering leadership fulfills individuals' needs for competence and autonomy, which SDT argues are critical to all individuals' self-definition (Bandura, 1986; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Gagne, & Deci, 2005), social comparison theory suggests that those that perceive they are receiving less empowering leadership (e.g., upward social comparison) than other team members will engage in contrast-based social comparisons that generate reduced self-

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<sup>1</sup> Although research indicates that some people report that they desire structure and direction more than autonomy, which is in opposition to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985), there is evidence that all individuals – even those that report a desire for structure and direction – benefit when they are given autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon, Joiner, & Williams, 2003), validating that the need for autonomy is universal.

evaluations, envy, as well as feelings of demoralization (Festinger, 1954; Li & Liao, 2014; Tesser, 1988; Wood, 1989).

Second, past research shows that destructive responses to upward social comparisons occur when individuals share “similar surrounding dimensions” (Festinger, 1954). In fact, inferior or “unfavorable comparisons are especially painful” when one compares himself or herself with others who share similar working conditions and situations (Wood, 1989, p. 243). This is because individuals that share similar experiences, situations, and attributes have fewer confounding environmental factors that might allow those making upward social comparisons to justify, distort, or marginalize their perceived inferiority with regards to the comparison dimension (Goethals, 1986; Perloff & Fetzer, 1986). Without environmental factors to justify why they are receiving less empowering leadership than their colleagues, unfavorable upward social comparisons lead individuals to experience low self-evaluations, resulting in feeling high levels of demoralization and resentment. Since most team members have similar surrounding dimensions (e.g., related tasks, same leader, similar work space, and likely possess similar attributes [Schneider, 1987]), they are prone to experience stronger feelings of frustration, distain, and pain as a result of unfavorable upward social comparisons.

Third, scholars have also argued that individuals view themselves as “sacred” or self-important, thus “everyone desires to be treated with sensitivity, sincerity, respect, care, trust, dignity, and transparency with less consideration of other attributes such as ability, competence, or performance” (Bies, 2001, p. 101). When leaders differentially

empower their subordinates due to perceiving each team member as having different levels of ability, value, and competence, they violate these positive desires. As a result, team members that receive less of these positive desires from the leader experience resentment and disdain toward those that receive more of these positive desires.

A wide array of research has found that when individuals perceive themselves as inferior due to upward social comparisons on dimensions that are close to their self-definition, they experience lower self-evaluations as well as depressive feelings (Beck, 1967; Gilbert, 1992; Smith et al., 1994), discouragement and inadequacy (Taylor, Falke, Shoptaw, & Lichtman, 1986; Wheeler & Miyake, 1992), hostility (Solomon, 1976), resentment (Folger, 1987; Smith, 2000) shame (Gilbert, 1992; Lewis, 1992), and envy (De Paola, 2001; Salovey & Rothman, 1991; Smith & Kim, 2007). In addition, social comparison research indicates that when individuals perceive they have less of something that is important to them, then they experience what some social comparison scholars call relative deprivation, which drives them to engage in behaviors focused on reducing their perceived deprivation (Crosby, 1976, 1984). Subsequently, individuals' low self-evaluations, negative feelings, and the desire to reduce the perceived discrepancy drive them to respond destructively to the upward social comparisons by seeking to withdraw from associating with the superior other (Tesser, 1988), tearing the superior other down by harming them (Lam, Van der Vegt, & Huang, 2011), withholding information from them (Pemberton & Sedikides, 2001), or gossiping about them (Wert & Salovey, 2004). Additional evidence shows that when business students were informed that their "business acumen" was "surprisingly low" relative to other

business students, they displayed high levels of envy, which led to increased disparagement and reduced friendship toward those that were coined as having superior business acumen (Salovey & Rodin, 1984). Similar effects have been shown when individuals that perceived they receive less pay than their colleagues have voluntarily turned over from their organization (Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1992). Similarly, a recent study divulged that when individuals perceived themselves as inferior in work performance to their colleagues, they experienced increased envy, which resulted in high performers reporting enhanced victimization from their colleagues (Kim & Glomb, 2014).

Therefore, since empowering leadership is directly linked to the satisfaction of everyone's universal needs of competence and autonomy, empowering leadership is oftentimes closely tied to everyone's self-definition. In turn, when individuals perceive they receive less empowerment from their leader, social comparison theory suggests that they inherently feel disdain and animosity towards those that receive higher relative levels of empowering leadership from their team leader. As a result, by differentially empowering their team members, team leaders facilitate negative feelings and behaviors within their teams, which produces tension and animosity among team members.

As noted previously, Festinger (1954) posited that individuals have a unidirectional drive to be better than others with regards to abilities that are critical to their self-definition. Research shows that when individuals perceive that they are more successful than others with regards to a social comparison dimension (i.e., receive more empowering leadership than other team members), then they engage in downward social

comparisons (Wills, 1981). Similar to upward social comparisons, when the comparison dimension (e.g., empowering leadership) is central to one's self-definition and someone sees others as having similar surrounding dimensions, then "favorable comparisons are especially pleasurable," which stimulates heightened levels of interpersonal competition among their referents to maintain their superior status with regards to the social comparison dimension (Wood, 1989, p. 243; see also Festinger, 1954). Because empowering leadership is associated with the fulfillment of one's psychological needs (Baard et al., 2004; Deci & Ryan, 2012; Martin et al., 2013) and team members share similar surrounding dimensions (Greenberg et al., 2007; Molleman et al., 2007), superior referents are likely to compete to retain their superior status. As such, Wills (1981) argued that superior referents may actively strive to retain their "superior" status by derogating and undermining their perceived inferior others. Tesser and Smith (1980) found evidence that superior referents purposefully try to hinder inferior others in order to retain their perceived superiority. In addition, Gibbons and McCoy (1991) found that individuals with higher self-esteem derogated their downward comparison targets. Thus, differentiated empowering leadership also generates team relationship conflict by motivating those that are more empowered by the leader to derogate their less empowered team members in order to retain their perceived superiority. Therefore, I project the following:

**Hypothesis 8:** Differentiated empowering leadership is positively related to team relationship conflict, above and beyond the effects of LMX differentiation.

According to social comparison scholars, another social context that is likely to amplify the salience of social comparisons is team task interdependence (Greenberg et al. 2007; Molleman et al., 2007). Team task interdependence is likely to enhance the effects of differentiated empowering leadership on team relationship conflict for two reasons. First, a fundamental assumption of social comparison theory is that prior to exhibiting hostility toward or undermining superior referents that are perceived as threatening or demoralizing due to social comparisons, individuals strive to withdraw from or cease interacting with their superior referents (Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Festinger, 1954; Smith & Insko, 1987; Wilson & Benner, 1971). However, in a team setting, team members' ability to withdraw or avoid one another is limited, because their tasks require regular coordination and interaction (Salas et al., 1992). In fact, the more structural task interdependence a team espouses, the more team members are forced to coordinate and interact to complete their tasks (Courtright, Gardner, Smith, McCormick, & Colbert, in press; Kozlowski & Bell, 2003). Subsequently, the teams that possess more task interdependence give their team members fewer opportunities to cope with threatening social comparisons through withdrawal. Festinger (1954) explicitly articulated that if individuals are unable to withdraw from unfavorable or threatening social comparisons, then they are likely to have "deep experiences of failure and feelings of inadequacy" (p. 137), which spurs inferior others to derogate or undermine their superior others.

Second, high task interdependence augments the frequency of social comparisons among team members due to the fact that they "are continuously confronted with the

attitudes, abilities, looks, performance, and personalities of other people” (Molleman et al., 2007, p. 1164). Therefore, team members with high task interdependence are more aware of differential treatment within the team, because of their enhanced level and depth of interactions (Colquitt, 2004). Thus, team members that are less empowered by their team leader more frequently recognize their inferiority when they belong to teams that espouse high task interdependence. Inversely, being that high task interdependence allows team members to have more information about each other due to augmented within-team interactions, the inferiority of those that are less empowered by the team leader is more publicly known among the team (Goodman & Haisely, 2007), which social comparison research indicates augments the level of demoralization, shame, and inadequacy experienced by the inferior referent (Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Smith & Insko, 1987). As a result, to cope with these negative self-perceptions, inferior referents increase the extent to which they derogate, undermine, or purposefully harm their superior referents (Duffy, Scott, Shaw, Tepper, & Aquino, 2012; Kim & Glomb, 2014; Pemberton & Sedikides, 2001), amplifying the effects of differentiated empowering leadership on team relationship conflict. Therefore, I propose:

**Hypothesis 9:** The relationship between differentiated empowering leadership and team relationship conflict is moderated by task interdependence, such that the relationship is stronger when team task interdependence is high.

Social comparison theory explains how social comparisons in team settings impact individual-level processes and outcomes (e.g., withdrawal, adaptability, and change; Wood, 1989), but it does little to explain how intra-team social comparisons



collectively impact team-level outcomes<sup>2</sup>. As a result, there is little research that has considered the impacts of social comparisons in teams on team-level processes and outcomes, particularly in the workplace (Buunk et al., 2007; Molleman et al., 2007). To date, the only article that has leveraged social comparison theory to analyze team level processes and outcomes in the workplace did not measure social comparisons explicitly and focused on team performance (Li & Liao, 2014), which is different than dynamic proactive and adaptive performance (Griffin et al., 2007). Aggregating the basic assumptions of social comparison theory to the team level of analysis, I explain how differentiated empowering leadership generates team relationship conflict, which in turn reduces team proactive and adaptive performance.

Team proactive performance is defined as “the extent to which a team engages in self-starting, future-focused actions that aim to change the external situation or the team itself” (Williams et al., 2010, p. 302), while team adaptive performance is defined as the extent to which teams “incrementally improve and rapidly respond to novel and changing task demands” (Kozlowski et al., 2009, p. 21; Kozlowski et al., 1999). Similar to their individual-level analogs, team proactivity and adaptability are unique performance dimensions, as proactivity is founded on inciting change and adaptive performance is focused on effectively responding to change (Williams et al., 2010). Moreover, neither team proactive performance nor adaptive performance are the same as

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that there is extensive research that has looked at how within-team social comparisons with regards to *opinions* or *information* impact team-level outcomes (see Forsyth, 2000 for a review), but much less has focused on how competence-based social comparisons impact team-level outcomes (Buunk et al. 2007; Molleman et al. 2007).

the sum of their individual team members' proactive and adaptive performance, respectively. Rather, both forms of performance are focused on the way the team behaves as an interdependent and collectively goal-driven combination of individuals (Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999). As a result, while an individual team member might behave adaptively by maintaining one's performance in spite of technological or organizational change, unless the effort is orchestrated and shared among the team members, the team itself is not deemed adaptive. Such is also the case with proactive performance (Williams et al., 2010).

Being that proactive and adaptive performance are dynamic in nature, they require the entire team's cooperation and collaboration in order to effectively respond to and incite change. While both team proactive and adaptive performance are unique from their individual-level analogs in structure (due to the fact that they consist of interpersonal interactions among team members rather than individual behaviors), they are similar to their individual analogs in function (Burke et al., 2006; Morgeson & Hofmann, 1999; Williams et al., 2010). For example, as teams strive to fulfill their tasks, according to Marks, Mathieu, and Zaccaro (2001), team members interact with one another to set goals and plan the process of goal completion, regulate their goal progression, regulate ambient conditions, and manage their interdependent tasks. Along those lines, Chen, Thomas, and Wallace (2005) found that as teams effectively implement team processes (e.g., goal planning, goal monitoring, monitoring ambient factors, and relationship monitoring), teams are more likely to exhibit adaptive

performance. In addition, Tesluk and Mathieu (1999) discovered that team processes were important predictors of proactive crew management.

According to Williams et al. (2010), positive interpersonal relationships are paramount for proactive performance due to the inherently risky nature of engaging in proactive performance (see also Parker et al., 2006). As previously noted, for team proactive performance to occur, the specific behavior must be collectively organized among team members (Williams et al., 2010). For teams to orchestrate their tasks and skills toward collectively initiating change there needs to be some form of team consensus or agreement among its members, which generally requires ideas to be pitched by individuals and constructively developed by the team. Since team proactive performance entails challenging the status quo of the team or organization (Parker et al., 2006), it is common for team members to weigh the risks against the benefits of trying to persuade their fellow team members to proactively change the team's processes or environment (see Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Although at the individual-level, Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, and Dutton (1998) provided some support for the importance of interpersonal relationships when it comes to proactive performance by revealing that issue selling (defined as "calling the organization's attention to key trends, developments, and events that have implications for organizational performance" (p. 23; see also Parker & Collins, 2010) was positively related to the quality of relationship between the issue seller and the listening audience (e.g., their leader). In addition, another study revealed that trust among coworkers was positively related to displaying individual proactive performance (Parker et al., 2006).

Based on past research on team relationship conflict, there are multiple ways in which relationship conflict impacts team proactivity. First, poor intra-team relationships inhibit team consensus building, decision-making, and implementation of decisions (Guetzkow & Gyr, 1954; Jehn & Banderseky, 2003). Part of the reason for this is that relationship conflict can push team members to not cooperate with one another (Somech, Desivilya, & Lidogoster, 2009) to the extent that team members disagree with one another in spite of the fact that they rationally know that the rest of the team is in favor of a proposed idea or outcome (Jehn & Rispens, 2008). Along these lines, past research has found that relationship conflict inhibits the implementation of team processes (Amason, 1996; Evan, 1965; Jehn, 1995), which are critical for proactive performance (see Tesluk & Mathieu, 1999).

Second, teams with relationship conflict are less receptive to new ideas pitched by other team members simply due to their poor interpersonal relationships (Pelled, 1996). As a result, team members are less motivated to share their change-focused ideas and if they do muster up the courage to challenge the status quo, then other team members are unlikely to receive their ideas favorably. Along these lines, relationship conflict has been shown to hinder mutual understanding among team members (Deutsch, 1969), so when team members propose changes to one another, team members experiencing relationship conflict are likely to misinterpret the changes as personal critiques or attacks (Amason & Scheiger, 1994). Subsequently, the team's ability to engage in constructive discussions during goal planning and monitoring is limited,

restricting the team's ability to collectively accept and initiate proposed changes (Amason & Schweiger, 1994).

Third, team proactive performance is more discretionary (Griffin et al., 2007), which generally excludes it from being rewarded by organizational reward systems. This is important to note, because interpersonal conflicts among team members reduce team commitment, team identity, team member satisfaction, and collective meaning (de Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; Jehn, 1995; Ross, 1989; Tjosvold, 1991; Tjosvold, Poon, & Yu, 2005), which demotivate team members from working together for the betterment of the collective (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Williams et al., 2010). As a result, team members are more apt to focus on individual tasks that are directly measured in their individual performance evaluations (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003), which reduces the likelihood of collaborative team proactive performance. Williams and colleagues (2010) provided preliminary support that relationship conflict negatively impacts team proactive performance by discovering that favorable interpersonal norms positively predicted team proactive performance. Thus, I propose:

**Hypothesis 10:** Team-level differentiated empowering leadership has a negative indirect effect on team proactive performance through team relationship conflict.

**Hypothesis 11:** The negative indirect effect of differentiated empowering leadership on team proactive performance through team relationship conflict is moderated by team task interdependence, such that when task interdependence is high, then the indirect effect is stronger.

In addition to relationship conflict negatively impacting team proactive performance, I also expect it to negatively influence team adaptive performance. As a team-level construct, team adaptive performance is highly dependent on team members effectively orchestrating their interdependent tasks, skills, and knowledge (Burke et al., 2006) in order to retain high levels of team flexibility, responsiveness, and performance in the face of external and internal threats and demands. This is because when teams effectively orchestrate their interdependent tasks, they can better anticipate future changes, share information, monitor one another's performance, aid each other in times of need, and adjust their collective strategy (Entin & Serfaty, 1999; Kozlowski et al., 2009), all of which ensure flexibility and reactivity to changes or threats. Along these lines, mutual trust is another critical predictor of team adaptive performance (Rosen, Bedwell, Wildman, Fritzsche, Salas, & Burke, 2011), because it permits intra-team monitoring and team processes to function more smoothly despite conflict or task demands (Kozlowski et al., 2009). Burke et al. (2006) also noted that team adaptive performance is contingent upon teams having shared cognitions of who knows what information, who has what skills, and who has what social networks (see also Rosen et al., 2011). By having shared cognitions the team is able synergistically leverage its individual resources in order to more efficiently respond to external threats imposed on the team (see also Hollingshead, 2001).

With that in mind, relationship conflict negatively influences team adaptive performance by impairing team functioning in a variety of ways (Rispens, Greer, Jehn, & Thatcher, 2011). First, team relationship conflict depletes team members' cognitive

functioning and processing of complex information (Roseman, Wiest, Swartz, 1994; Simons & Peterson, 2000; Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981). As a result, the team's ability to monitor its internal deficiencies and external threats is compromised, making the team less able to integrate diverse information in order to creatively develop novel responses to changes or threats (Carnevale & Probst, 1998). Second, there is evidence that relationship conflict is associated with reduced social processes, which undermines the beneficial effects of shared cognitions among team members (Jehn, Rispens, & Thatcher, 2010; Rau, 2005). In other words, though team members share an understanding of each member's knowledge, skills, and networks, interpersonal stress and tension inhibit them from leveraging or calling upon one another's resources, which undermines the team's flexibility and responsiveness. Third, relationship conflict is negatively related to intra-team trust (Langfred, 2007; Lau & Cobb, 2010) and cooperation (Somech et al., 2009), which precludes team members from effectively orchestrating their interdependent tasks (Amason, 1996; Evan, 1965; Jehn, 1995). Subsequently, the team exhibits less effective team processes, which are also critical to team adaptive performance (Chen et al., 2005). Finally, according to Jehn (1995), time and energy that should be devoted to team processes is expended discussing, resolving, and sometimes ignoring interpersonal conflicts among team members (see also Evan, 1965). As a result, teams with relationship conflict have less time and energy to effectively adjust their plans and goals in order to cope with changes or threats. In addition, these teams are less persistent through challenges, because their members have

expended their personal resources in fixing or avoiding the extant intra-team conflicts.

Therefore, I propose:

**Hypothesis 12:** Differentiated empowering leadership has a negative indirect effect on team adaptive performance through team relationship conflict.

**Hypothesis 13:** The negative indirect effect of differentiated empowering leadership on team adaptive performance through team relationship conflict is moderated by team task interdependence, such that when task interdependence is high, then the indirect effect is stronger.

Being that team member motivation is impacted by environmental stimuli (Ryan & Deci, 2010) and that team relationship conflict is a particularly strong environmental factor that impacts individual motivation (see Jehn, 1995), I also expect team relationship conflict to directly undermine team member psychological empowerment. This is because team relationship conflict compromises the extent to which team members' need for relatedness and competence are satisfied (Chen et al., 2011; Gagne & Deci, 2005). As noted previously, high team relationship conflict entails strong interpersonal discord characterized by distrust, animosity, anxiety, annoyance, and frustration among team members (Jehn, 1997; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Lau & Cobb, 2010). Subsequently, these negative reactions produce "uncomfortable feelings and dejection among members" (Jehn, 1995, p. 258; see also Jehn & Mannix, 2001), resulting in team members disliking one another and increasing their intentions to quit (Jehn, 1995). The more team members experience these negative emotions and reactions, the less their need for relatedness (i.e., need to be close to, trusting of, caring



for, and cared for by others” (Deci & Ryan, 2012, p. 421)) is fulfilled. In addition, according to Conger and Kanungo (1988), individuals’ perceived competence is influenced by their emotional arousal states, such that when they experience stress, fear, anxiety, or depression they experience lower perceived competence, because these states preclude them from feeling as confident in their abilities to succeed (Bandura, 1997). Inversely, teams that are low in relationship conflict are interpersonally close (characterized by high interpersonal trust, mutual respect, and enjoyable interpersonal interactions), which fulfills both individuals’ need for relatedness and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Conger & Kanungo, 1988; Neilsen, 1986). As a result, the more relationship conflict is present within a team, the less relatedness and competence its members experience, which are a critical ingredient of individual psychological empowerment (Gagne & Deci, 2005). Consistent with the aforementioned argument, Seo, Barrett, and Bartunek (2004) argued that negative affective experiences, which are highly likely in teams with relationship conflict (Jehn, 1995), reduce motivational states. Although inverse to the current prediction, past research provides preliminary support of this relationship by showing that peer support generated stronger feelings of psychological empowerment. With this in mind, it is likely that team relationship conflict results in individuals reported weaker levels of psychological empowerment<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, I predict:

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<sup>3</sup> Although the relationship between relationship conflict and individual psychological empowerment has been suggested previously (Staw et al., 1981; Seo et al., 2004), only one article has empirically analyzed the cross-level relationship (Chen et al., 2011). With that said, Chen et al.’s (2011) results were inconclusive in that they found the relationship was supported in a lab study and not supported in a field study. It is possible that the latter study did not find significant results due to its research design, because

**Hypothesis 14:** Team relationship conflict is negatively related to individual psychological empowerment.

**Hypothesis 15:** Team-level differentiated empowering leadership has a negative indirect effect on individual psychological empowerment through team relationship conflict.

**Hypothesis 16:** Team relationship conflict has a negative indirect effect on individual a) proactive performance and b) adaptive performance through individual psychological empowerment.

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the researchers asked leaders to select a limited number of team members from their team to participate in the study. By so doing, it is likely that the team members that experience higher levels of relationship conflict within the team were not asked to participate in the study, which would create some systematic range restriction. Furthermore, Chen et al. (2011) limited their analysis to the effects of relationship conflict, whereas, I position relationship conflict as a key team-level process through which differentiated empowering leadership impacts both team outcomes and individual motivation.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **SAMPLE, RESEARCH DESIGN, AND METHODS**

##### **Sample**

Data were collected from a sample of 320 employees organized in 72 work teams from five unique companies across four distinct industries (e.g., textiles, engineering, higher education, and software design). All of the companies were located throughout the southern United States. The average team size was 5.15 (median of 4 members per team), ranging from two to 11 team members. The average age of the team members was 40.8 years old, with 54 percent of the sample being male. There were 60.34 percent of team members that reported being Caucasian. Fifty-two percent of the team members reported having completed at least an Associates Degree. On average, team members had worked for 7.49 years at their current company and 10.49 years within their current industry. The teams engaged in a wide variety of tasks. For example, some teams coordinated special events, developed marketing materials, tested the composition of different materials related to oil and gas, installed and maintained information technology, coordinated service activities, and conducted research and development activities. The teams' work activities were predominantly organized so that team members depended on one another to complete their tasks. For example, on average, team leaders rated their team's task interdependence at 5.34 (s.d. = 1.3) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly Disagree to 7 = "Strongly Agree").

As for the team leaders, their average age was 44.16. There were 73.3 percent of team leaders that self-identified as Caucasian. Overall, 70 percent of the team leaders

reported having earned at least an Associates Degree. The team leaders reported working, on average, 12.48 years for their company.

## **Research Design**

I worked closely with a senior leader in each organization to administer the study. In each organization the team members were asked to complete two surveys and their corresponding team leader was asked to complete one survey. I invited 374 team members via email to complete the first team member survey; and of these, 320 team members completed the survey (84 percent response rate). In the first survey I asked the team members to evaluate their leader's empowering leadership toward them, LMX, empowering leadership-social comparison, LMX-social comparison, task interdependence, and their demographic information. Approximately four to six weeks later, all team members were invited to complete the second team member survey via email. There were 313 team members that completed the second team member survey (82 percent response rate). In the second team member survey I asked the respondents to evaluate their team's relationship conflict and their own individual psychological empowerment. Simultaneous to the second team member survey, the team leaders were invited to complete a unique survey, which asked them to rate the task interdependence of their team(s) as well as the proactive and adaptive performance of their team(s) as a whole and of each of their team members. There were three team leaders that led two participating teams, with all other team leaders leading a single participating team. Ultimately, 72 team leaders were invited to take the survey and 65 completed it (90

percent response rate) across 68 teams. The rather high response rates are due to the fact that the data were predominantly collected within small organizations; thus, the senior leader with whom I worked was able to strongly advocate employee and leader participation in the surveys via their personal ties with most of the employees and leaders. By collecting the data across two time points and from different sources, I was able to mitigate the potential threats of common method variance from impacting my results (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

I decided to retain all the data I collected to compute the team-level variables, even the data acquired from individuals that only completed one of the two team member surveys. I did this for three reasons. First, by including all of the data, I am able to more accurately capture the collective perspectives of the team-level variables, because by dropping those with partial data I would constrain my ability to fully assess the collective's perspective of what is happening within the teams. Along these lines, Maloney, Johnson, and Zellmer-Bruhn (2010) noted that measurement reliability is reduced when there are fewer respondents in each team. Second, by retaining all of the acquired data, the statistical power of my analyses is enhanced, thus allowing me to conduct a stronger, more accurate test of my proposed model (Maloney et al., 2010). Finally, past research provides strong evidence that supports the retention of all available data. For example, Newman (2003) found statistical evidence that eliminating data due to not having completed all surveys in a longitudinal model resulted in analyses that significantly underperformed relative to other approaches that included the retention of all acquired data. At the team level of analysis, research shows that team analyses can be

biased when teams with low response rates are excluded from analyses (Allen, Williams, Stanley, & Ross, 2007). In addition, using a Monte Carlo simulation, Maloney et al. (2010) demonstrated that “better results are obtained in analyses that use all of the data” (p. 296), because the analyses have better measurement reliability and more statistical power. Thus, for all team-level analyses, I followed the guidance of Newman (2009), who argued that “using all the available data” is “the fundamental principle of missing data analyses” (p. 11). See Appendix B for breakdown of missing data.

## **Measures**

Unless otherwise indicated, all items were collected using a Likert scale anchored at 1 = “strongly disagree” and 7 = “strongly agree.” All measures for which I only provide sample items in the text are found in their entirety in Appendix B.

**Differentiated empowering leadership.** To capture differentiated empowering leadership, in the first team member survey each team member was asked to rate the unique *individual-focused empowering leadership* he or she received from his or her team leader using Kirkman and Rosen’s (1999) 14-item scale. Kirkman and Rosen’s (1999) scale highlights a comprehensive set of empowering leadership behaviors, such as: delegating responsibilities, asking for advice, giving control over tasks, giving control over goal setting, giving control over problem solving, encouraging high expectations, and displaying confidence in one’s abilities. Sample items include: “gives me many responsibilities,” “encourages me to take control of my work,” and “uses my suggestions and ideas when making decisions.” The reliability of this scale was .92.

After collecting each team member's perception of the amount of individual-focused empowering leadership he or she receives from his or her team leader, I followed the protocol set by past research to generate team-level differentiated empowering leadership (Cole et al., 2011; Li & Liao, 2014). Specifically, I computed the standard deviation of individual-focused empowering leadership reported by each team's members.

Statisticians have noted that to accurately capture the predictive effects of differentiated empowering leadership, scholars must also compute and control for the mean level of empowering leadership for each team by averaging the team's individual empowering leadership scores (Bliese & Halverson, 1998; Cole et al., 2011). Thus, I applied a direct consensus approach (Chan, 1998) and averaged the individual-focused empowering leadership ratings from the members of each team to create a *mean empowering leadership* score for each team, which I use as a control variable. To validate the aggregation of the individual-level scores, I followed past research on teams (Chen & Bliese, 2002; Stewart et al., 2012) and computed the  $r_{wg(j)}$  to evaluate intra-team agreement (James et al., 1984) as well as the intra-class correlation values (ICC). The ICC(1) value displays the amount of variance in ratings that is attached to team membership. The ICC(2) value reveals the extent to which teams can be reliably differentiated from one another when it comes to the variable of interest. For empowering leadership the  $r_{wg(j)}$  was .92 with a uniform distribution, which was well beyond the .70 cut-off that has been highlighted in past research to merit aggregation (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). The ICC(1) value was .16, which was also well above the

previously set .05 cut-off point designated to merit aggregation (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). Collectively, the  $r_{wg(j)}$  and ICC(1) values provide strong evidence of within-group agreement for empowering leadership. The ICC(2) value was .46, which fell below the .60 cut-off set by Glick (1985) to merit aggregation. Moreover, according to Chen and Bliese (2002), low ICC(2) values should not prevent aggregation as long as aggregation for each variable is justified by theory as well as by the intra-team agreement aggregation statistics (see also Dong, Liao, Chuang, Zhou, & Campbell, 2015). In addition, Schneider, White, and Paul (1998) noted that a moderate ICC(2) value coupled with an acceptable  $r_{wg(j)}$  score provides sufficient grounds for aggregation. Being that I found substantial within-team agreement statistics and the ICC(2) value was moderately strong, I aggregated empowering leadership to the team level.

Individual-focused empowering leadership was also used as a control variable within the individual-level analyses, thus allowing me to test whether empowering leadership-social comparison is predictive of psychological empowerment above and beyond the direct effects of individual-focused empowering leadership (see Vidyarthi et al., 2010 for a similar example of this approach using LMX).

**Individual empowering leadership-social comparison.** Similar to past research on social comparisons (Vidyarthi et al. 2010), in the first team member survey I asked team members to measure their empowering leadership-social comparisons by reframing Kirkman and Rosen's (1999) empowering leadership scale to have each individual team member evaluate the amount of empowering leadership he or she receives relative to his or her other team members. Using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "A Lot Less" to 7 = "A Lot



More”), I altered Kirkman and Rosen’s (1999) 14-item scale to assess the relative amount of empowering leadership each person received from his or her team leader compared to the amount that they perceived that their other team members received. For example, “Relative to the other members of your team, how many responsibilities does your team leader give you?” “Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader let you control your work activities?” “Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your work leader ask you for advice and ideas when making decisions?” The reliability of this scale was .96.

**Team task interdependence.** In the first team member survey, team members were asked to complete a three-item scale by Pearce and Gregersen (1991) to measure team task interdependence. Team leaders were also asked to rate their team’s task interdependence using the same scale. The items include: “Team members work closely with each other in doing their work,” “Team members frequently must coordinate their efforts with each other,” and “The way individual members perform their jobs has a significant impact upon others in the team.” The reliability of this scale was .84 for the team members and .80 for the team leaders. For team task interdependence the  $r_{wg(j)}$  was .74 with a uniform distribution; ICC(1) was .27; and ICC(2) was .62, all of which merit aggregating the variable to the team level of analysis.

**Team relationship conflict.** In the second team member survey, each team member was also asked to complete Jehn’s (1995) 4-item scale of team relationship conflict. This scale applied a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = “none” to 5 = “a lot.” The items include: “How much friction is there among members in your team?,” “How much

are personality conflicts evident in your team?,” “How much tension is there among members of your team?,” and “How much emotional conflict is there among members in your team?” The scale’s reliability was .93. For relationship conflict the  $r_{wg(j)}$  was .95 with a uniform distribution; ICC(1) was .22; and ICC(2) was .55. With strong intra-team agreement indices and a moderately strong ICC(2) value, I aggregated the individual responses to create team level relationship conflict.

**Psychological empowerment.** In the second team member survey, team members were also asked to complete a 12-item psychological empowerment scale developed by Spreitzer (1995). The scale consists of three unique items for each of the four cognitive manifestations of intrinsic motivation. Sample items include: “The work I do in the team is very important to me” (meaningfulness), “I am confident about my ability to do my job in the team” (competence), “I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my work in the team” (self-determination), and “My impact on what happens in the team is large” (impact). The scale’s reliability was .90.

**Team member proactive performance.** In the team leader survey, the team leaders were asked to complete Griffin et al.’s (2007) three-item scale of task proactive performance for each person in their team. The items include: “Initiates better ways of doing his/her core tasks,” “Comes up with ideas to improve the way in which his/her core tasks are done,” and “Makes changes to the way his/her core tasks are done.” This scale’s reliability was .94.

**Team member adaptive performance.** The team leader was also asked to complete Griffin et al.’s (2007) three-item scale of adaptive performance for each person

in their team. The items include: “Adapts well to changes in core tasks,” “Copes with changes to the way he/she has to do his/her core tasks,” and “Learns new skills to help him/her adapt to changes in his/her core tasks.” The reliability of this scale was .86.

**Team member task proficiency.** Although the proposed model is focused on proactive and adaptive performance, for the purpose of comprehensiveness and comparison I also asked team leaders to measure individual task proficiency. Each team leader was asked to complete Griffin et al.’s (2007) three-item scale of task proficiency for each person in their team. The items include: “Carries out the core parts of his/her job well,” “Completes his/her core tasks well using the standard procedures,” and “Ensures his/her tasks are completed properly.” The scale’s reliability was .92.

**Team proactive performance.** To measure team proactive performance, I followed the approach applied by Martin et al. (2014) and asked the team leaders to complete Griffin et al.’s (2007) three-item scale of team task proactive performance for their team, with the items’ target being changed to the team. The items include: “The team suggests ways to make the team more effective,” “The team develops new and improved methods to help it perform better,” and “The team improves the way it does things.” This scale had a reliability of .92.

**Team adaptive performance.** Each team leader was asked to complete Griffin et al.’s (2007) three-item scale of team task proactive performance for their team, with the items’ target being changed to the team. The items include: “The team deals effectively with changes affecting it (e.g., new members),” “The team learns new skills

or takes on new roles to cope with changes in the way it works,” and “The team responds constructively to changes in the way it works.” The scale’s reliability was .84.

**Team task proficiency.** Although the proposed model is focused on proactive and adaptive performance, for the purpose of comprehensiveness and comparison I also asked team leaders to measure team task proficiency. The team leaders were asked to complete Griffin et al.’s (2007) three-item scale of team task performance for their team, with the items’ target being changed to the team. The items include: “The team carries out the core parts of its job well,” “The team completes core tasks well using the standard procedures,” and “The team ensures its tasks are completed properly.” The scale’s reliability was .79.

**Control variables.** Due to the conceptual overlap between empowering leadership and leader-member exchange (LMX; Hassan et al., 2013; see Appendix A) and because past research has linked LMX to psychological empowerment and LMX differentiation to team performance (Aryee & Chen, 2006; Henderson et al., 2009; Li & Liao, 2014; Wat & Shaffer, 2005), for individual level analyses, I controlled for LMX and LMX-social comparison. In addition, at the individual level, I controlled for individual empowering leadership in order to reveal the additive effects of empowering leadership-social comparison beyond the direct effects of individual empowering leadership.

For cross level and team-level analyses, I controlled for LMX differentiation and mean LMX. I specifically controlled for these variables to distinguish differentiated empowering leadership from LMX differentiation and display the predictive effects of

differentiated empowering leadership above and beyond LMX differentiation and mean levels of LMX at the team level. Being that the data were collected across multiple organizations, I followed past research and controlled for each organization by dummy coding each organization (see Stewart, Courtright, & Barrick, 2012). In addition, I controlled for the mean-level of all dispersion variables (e.g., empowering leadership, LMX, company tenure, and industry tenure), because methodologically I cannot accurately determine the unique effects of differentiated empowering leadership (or any of the differentiation variables) without controlling for the interdependence between the mean level and differentiation of the team-level predictors (see Bliese & Halverson, 1998; Cole et al., 2011).

In addition, I controlled for company tenure and industry tenure within all individual-level analyses, as well as differentiated company tenure and differentiated industry tenure within all team-level analyses. The decision to do this was based on the fact that individuals that have more experience in the company or more experience in the industry are more likely to be potentially perceived as competent by their team leader and thus be more empowered by their leader (Yukl, 1999). Furthermore, more experienced individuals and teams are more likely to feel comfortable to incite change both at the individual and team levels of analysis. This is in line with past research that has focused on LMX differentiation (Harris, Li, & Kirkman, 2014). For the same purpose, at the individual level I controlled for team member age, gender, and education, because these are also potential influencers of individuals' proclivity to behave proactively (Harris et al., 2014). Finally, at the team level of analysis, research on

empowering leadership and proactivity has noted that team leader company tenure, gender, and ethnicity can bias how employees perceive and react to a team leader's behaviors. Thus, in line with past research, I also controlled for team leader company tenure, ethnicity, and gender for all team-level analyses (Martin et al., 2015).

**Leader-member exchange.** Team members completed Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) LMX7 scale. Sample items include: "I usually know where I stand with my supervisor," "I count on my supervisor to 'bail me out', even at his/her expense, when I really need it," and "I would characterize the work relationship I have with my supervisor as extremely effective." The reliability was .93. To allow me to accurately analyze the predictive effects of LMX differentiation within the team- and cross-level analyses, I also computed the mean LMX score for all teams. For mean leader-member exchange, the  $r_{wg(j)}$  was .84 with a uniform distribution; ICC(1) was .16; and ICC(2) was .46.

**Leader-member exchange differentiation.** Following past research (Liao, Liu, & Loi, 2010), to generate LMX differentiation, I computed the standard deviation of the LMX scores reported by the members of each team.

**Leader-member exchange-social comparison.** Similar to empowering leadership-social comparison and in line with past research on LMXSC (see Vidyarthi et al., 2010), I had employees rate their LMXSC by answering six items developed by Liden and Erdogan and used in Erdogan (2002) and Vidyarthi et al. (2010). For example, "I have a better relationship with my team leader than most others in my team," "My team leader enjoys my company more than he/she enjoys the company of other team

members,” and “Relative to the others in my team, I receive more support from my team leader.” The reliability for empowering leadership-social comparison was .88.

**Company and industry tenure.** The team members and leaders were asked to report how long they have worked for their company in years and months (Company Tenure) as well as how long they have worked in the industry of which their company is a part (Industry Tenure).

**Gender.** The team members and leaders were also asked to report whether they were male or female.

**Education.** Each team member was asked to report the highest level of education they had completed (1 = High school/GED, 2 = Associates degree, 3 = Bachelor’s degree, 4 = Masters/Professional degree, and 5 = Doctoral degree).

**Ethnicity.** Each team leader was asked to report which of the following categories best represents their ethnic background: 1 = African American, 2 = Hispanic/Latino American, 3 = Asian, 4 = White/Caucasian, etc.

## **Measurement Models**

Being that empowering leadership and LMX are similar leadership constructs and one purpose of this study is to reveal the additive effects of differentiated empowering leadership above and beyond LMX differentiation, I analyzed the factor structure of the two variables using a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). I also included empowering leadership-social comparison in the CFA to show that common method variance did not influence these three variables being that they were collected in the

same survey by the same source. In addition, I wanted to establish empowering leadership-social comparisons' discriminant validity from both individual-focused empowering leadership and LMX. Rather than using all 14 observed items included in the empowering leadership and empowering leadership-social comparison scales for the CFA, I reduced the statistical power required to compute the CFAs by parceling each scale's 14 items into three unique parcels founded on the items' theoretical similarities (Hall, Snell, & Foust, 1999). Specifically, the six items related to giving employees autonomy were grouped in the same parcel, the four items related to allowing employees to participate in the team activities and decision making were parceled together, and the four items related to employee competence were parceled together. From there, I used the parcels as the observed variables for empowering leadership and empowering leadership-social comparison. The proposed three latent factors (empowering leadership, empowering leadership-social comparison and LMX), in which each multi-item scale loaded on a separate first-order latent factor, adequately fit the data ( $\chi^2 [62] = 208.44, p < .01$ ; CFI = .95; SRMR = .03; RMSEA = .09). To further determine the discriminant validity of the three scales, I computed a two-factor CFA, collapsing empowering leadership and LMX into a single factor, which resulted in poor fit ( $\chi^2 [64] = 298.54, p < .01$ ; CFI = .92; SRMR = .04; RMSEA = .12). A chi-square difference test displayed that the three-factor model provided a better fit than the two-factor model ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 90.10, df = 2, p < .01$ ). Next, I computed a single-factor CFA by collapsing all three scales into a single factor, which resulted in a poor fitting model ( $\chi^2 [65] = 658.79$ ; CFI = .79; SRMR = .10; RMSEA = .18). These CFA analyses provide sufficient evidence that empowering



leadership, empowering leadership-social comparison, and LMX are three distinct latent factors.

## **Analyses**

Being that the individuals in the study were nested within teams and a couple teams had the same team leader, I used random coefficient modeling (RCM) by using the “mixed” command in SPSS to test my hypotheses. This approach allowed me to account for the nonrandom nature that is inherent with nested data (Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2004). Bliese (2002) noted that RCM derives the accurate parameter estimates and significance tests for data that are multi-level and that lack independence, because RCM generates within-team and between-team variances and covariances separately and computes the correct standard errors for both within-team and between-team effects. I followed past research and also controlled for the fact that the teams were from five different organizations by creating dummy coded variable for four of the organizations (Stewart et al., 2012).

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

Table 1 provides a list of all the proposed hypotheses, in addition to whether the hypotheses were supported by the data. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations for the study variables. In line with predictions, the correlations reveal that differentiated empowering leadership is positively related to team relationship conflict ( $r = .26, p < .05$ ). In addition, there is a positive relationship between empowering leadership-social comparison and psychological empowerment ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ), which is subsequently related to individual proactivity ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ), providing some preliminary support for much of the individual-level hypotheses. Unexpectedly, team relationship conflict was unrelated to all of the team-level outcomes rated by the team leader, and psychological empowerment was not related to individual adaptability or individual task proficiency, which contradicts past meta-analytic research on psychological empowerment (Seibert et al., 2011).

Hypothesis 1 predicted that differentiated empowering leadership at the team level is positively related to the extent to which employees perceive empowering leadership-social comparison (i.e., perception that team members are receiving more or less individual empowering leadership than their other team members from their team leader) at the individual level. Using RCM, I found that 88.6 percent of the variance in empowering leadership-social comparison resides within the team and 11.4 percent of the variance resides between teams. Thus, most of the variance in empowering

leadership-social comparison is due to factors within the team instead of external to the team.

**TABLE 1** – Proposed Hypotheses

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Supported/ Not Supported</b>
<b>H1:</b> Differentiated empowering leadership is positively related to the extent to which team members perceive that they receive more or less empowering leadership than their other team members (i.e., empowering leadership-social comparison).	Partially Supported
<b>H2:</b> Team member empowering leadership-social comparison is positively related to psychological empowerment, such that individuals that perceive they are receiving more empowering leadership than their other team members (i.e., high empowering leadership-social comparison) will experience higher psychological empowerment, whereas, individuals that perceive they are receiving less empowering leadership than their other team members (i.e., low empowering leadership-social comparison) will experience lower psychological empowerment. This relationship exists above and beyond the direct effects of individual empowering leadership, LMX, and LMX social comparisons.	Supported
<b>H3:</b> Team-level differentiated empowering leadership has an indirect effect on individual psychological empowerment through individual empowering leadership-social comparison, above and beyond the effects of individual empowering leadership, LMX, and LMX social comparison.	Not Supported
<b>H4:</b> Team member psychological empowerment is positively related to team member proactive performance.	Not Supported
<b>H5:</b> Team member empowering leadership-social comparison is indirectly related to individual proactive performance through psychological empowerment, such that team members that perceive they are receiving more empowering leadership than their other team members will experience more psychological empowerment and thus more proactive performance. Inversely, individuals that perceive they are receiving less empowering leadership than their other team members will experience less psychological empowerment and thus less proactive performance.	Not Supported
<b>H6:</b> Team member psychological empowerment is positively related to individual adaptive performance.	Not Supported
<b>H7:</b> Team member empowering leadership-social comparison is indirectly related to individual adaptive performance through psychological empowerment, such that team members that perceive they are receiving more empowering leadership than their other team members will experience more psychological empowerment and thus more adaptive performance. Inversely, individuals that perceive they are receiving less empowering leadership than their other team members will experience less psychological empowerment and thus less adaptive performance.	Not Supported
<b>H8:</b> Differentiated empowering leadership is positively related to team relationship conflict, above and beyond the effects of LMX differentiation.	Not Supported

**TABLE 1 – Continued**

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Supported/ Not Supported</b>
<b>H9:</b> The relationship between differentiated empowering leadership and team relationship conflict is moderated by task interdependence, such that the relationship is stronger when team task interdependence is high.	Not Supported
<b>H10:</b> Team-level differentiated empowering leadership has a negative indirect effect on team proactive performance through team relationship conflict.	Not Supported
<b>H11:</b> The negative indirect effect of differentiated empowering leadership on team proactive performance through team relationship conflict is moderated by team task interdependence, such that when task interdependence is high, then the indirect effect is stronger.	Not Supported
<b>H12:</b> Differentiated empowering leadership has a negative indirect effect on team adaptive performance through team relationship conflict.	Not Supported
<b>H13:</b> The negative indirect effect of differentiated empowering leadership on team adaptive performance through team relationship conflict is moderated by team task interdependence, such that when task interdependence is high, then the indirect effect is stronger.	Not Supported
<b>H14:</b> Team relationship conflict is negatively related to individual psychological empowerment.	Not Supported
<b>H15:</b> Team-level differentiated empowering leadership has a negative indirect effect on individual psychological empowerment through team relationship conflict.	Not Supported
<b>H16:</b> Team relationship conflict has a negative indirect effect on individual a) proactive performance and b) adaptive performance through individual psychological empowerment.	Not Supported

**TABLE 2** – Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Variables in the Model

Level 1 (within-team)	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>1</b> Company Tenure	7.71	9.19	--											
<b>2</b> Industry Tenure	10.56	10.86	.82*	--										
<b>3</b> Gender <sup>a</sup>	1.41	.49	.02	-.05	--									
<b>4</b> Education	2.00	1.17	-.02	-.05	-.09	--								
<b>5</b> Individual-focused Empowering Leadership	5.55	.96	.04	.05	-.02	.08	<b>.92</b>							
<b>6</b> LMX	5.52	1.18	.05	.03	-.01	.03	.76*	<b>.93</b>						
<b>7</b> Empowering leadership-social comparison	4.29	.80	.02	.12	-.08	-.04	.37*	.40*	<b>.94</b>					
<b>8</b> LMX Social Comparison	3.37	1.10	.04	.03	-.11	.07	.19*	.27*	.50*	<b>.88</b>				
<b>9</b> Psychological Empowerment	5.55	.84	.06	.06	.08	.06	.36*	.33*	.30*	.16*	<b>.90</b>			
<b>10</b> Individual Proactivity	5.44	1.13	.03	.09	-.03	.19*	.13*	.11	.20*	-.02	.13*	<b>.94</b>		
<b>11</b> Individual Adaptability	5.72	.89	.01	.02	-.03	.11	.15*	.17*	.09	.05	.10	.49*	<b>.86</b>	
<b>12</b> Task Performance	6.11	.71	.07	.12	-.01	.06	.01	.06	.14*	-.06	.07	.62*	.57*	<b>.92</b>

\* < .05 (two-tailed)

**TABLE 2 – Continued**

Level 2 (between-team)		Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	Differentiated Company Tenure	5.59	5.83	.40*	.35*	-.01	-.02	.11	.06	-.06	-.18*	.02	-.09	-.21*	.06
14	Mean Company Tenure	7.16	5.36	.61*	.56*	.03	-.05	.10	.08	-.03	-.06	.03	.04	.02	.09
15	Differentiated Industry Tenure	7.08	6.01	.32*	.41*	-.03	.02	.06	.04	-.02	-.14*	-.01	-.08	-.20*	.11
16	Mean Industry Tenure	10.53	7.47	.53*	.66*	-.02	-.02	.12	.09	.03	-.05	.03	.08	.02	.12
17	Leader Gender	1.33	.47	.02	.00	.24*	.09	.09	.03	-.01	-.01	-.03	.02	.07	.03
18	Leader Company Tenure	12.48	9.38	.17*	.20*	.03	-.09	-.03	-.05	.05	.08	.06	.07	.15*	-.03
19	Team Size	5.15	2.78	-.01	-.04	-.04	-.16*	-.14*	-.12	.08	.08	-.13*	-.05	.06	.02
20	Differentiated Empowering Leadership	.74	.42	-.10	-.04	-.12	.05	-.41*	-.32*	-.12	.00	-.16*	-.12	-.07	.08
21	Mean Empowering Leadership	5.66	.59	.11	.14*	.07	.10	.56*	.46*	.28*	.04	.23*	.24*	.08	.06
22	LMX Differentiation	.93	.48	.00	.08	.04	.05	-.33*	-.41*	-.20*	-.08	-.10	-.09	-.06	.04
23	Mean LMX	5.63	.71	.08	.08	.03	.02	.43*	.56*	.28*	.11	.21*	.20*	.08	.07
24	Team Task Interdependence	5.34	1.30	.03	-.05	.04	-.09	.22*	.21*	.26*	.05	.04	.04	-.02	.01
25	Relationship Conflict	1.97	.55	-.03	-.03	.10	-.20*	-.20*	-.23*	.05	.14*	-.12	-.06	-.07	-.09
26	Team Proactivity	6.26	.61	.01	-.07	.04	.09	.17*	.08	.05	-.02	.06	.34*	.16*	.17*
27	Team Adaptability	5.82	.98	-.01	-.06	-.13	.09	.00	.13*	-.02	-.00	.03	.28*	.27*	.24*
28	Team Task Performance	5.86	.84	.15*	.12	-.00	.05	.11	.06	.06	-.04	.07	.25*	.30*	.40*

\* < .05 (two-tailed)

**TABLE 2 – Continued**

Level 2 (between-team)	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
<b>13</b> Differentiated Company Tenure	--															
<b>14</b> Mean Company Tenure	.69*	--														
<b>15</b> Differentiated Industry Tenure	.80*	.57*	--													
<b>16</b> Mean Industry Tenure	.53*	.81*	.62*	--												
<b>17</b> Leader Gender	-.01	.04	-.06	-.07	--											
<b>18</b> Leader Company Tenure	-.03	.22	-.03	.21	.20	--										
<b>19</b> Team Size	.08	.04	.01	-.07	.12	.19	--									
<b>20</b> Differentiated Empowering Leadership	.00	-.09	.21	-.03	-.13	.04	.16	--								
<b>21</b> Mean Empowering Leadership	.01	.08	-.03	.16	.05	.06	-.21	-.75*	--							
<b>22</b> LMX Differentiation	.07	.12	.18	.21	.01	.24*	.10	.66*	-.61*	--						
<b>23</b> Mean LMX	-.06	.01	-.05	.07	.03	-.04	-.20	-.62*	.80*	-.68*	--					
<b>24</b> Team Task Interdependence	-.01	.01	-.01	-.02	.16	.04	.25*	-.03	.16	.02	.06	<b>.84</b>				
<b>25</b> Relationship Conflict	-.08	.07	-.13	.05	.09	.10	.13	.26*	-.31*	.35*	-.33*	.18	<b>.93</b>			
<b>26</b> Team Proactivity	-.21	-.07	-.28*	-.14	.19	.05	-.04	-.21	.32*	-.11	.19	.42*	.07	<b>.92</b>		
<b>27</b> Team Adaptability	-.30*	-.15	-.27*	-.15	.07	.06	.03	-.05	.17	-.13	.28*	.14	-.12	.55*	<b>.84</b>	
<b>28</b> Team Task Performance	.03	.13	-.02	.07	.21	.08	.12	.01	.15	-.02	.08	.27*	-.03	.64*	.58*	<b>.80</b>

\* < .05 (two-tailed)

**TABLE 3** – RCM Analyses of Individual and Cross-level Effects

	Empowering Leadership Social Comparison			Empower. Leadership Social Comparison (Absolute Value)		Psych. Empower.	Proactive Perform.	Adaptive Perform.	Task Perform.
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Constant	4.41** (.25)	4.36** (.26)	4.27** (.27)	.40(.25)	.31(.24)	5.32** (.25)	5.49** (.37)	5.88** (.34)	5.95** (.26)
<i>Level 1 (within-team)</i>									
Company tenure	-.02 <sup>+</sup> (.01)	-.01(.01)	-.01(.01)	-.01 <sup>+</sup> (.01)	-.01(.01)	.01(.01)	-.01(.01)	-.00(.01)	-.00(.01)
Industry tenure	.02*(.01)	.02*(.01)	.02*(.01)	.02*(.01)	.02*(.01)	-.01(.01)	.00(.01)	-.00(.01)	-.00(.01)
Education	.00(.05)	-.01(.05)	-.01(.05)	-.01(.04)	-.03(.05)	-.02(.05)	.16**(.06)	.06(.05)	.00(.04)
Age	-.00(.00)	-.01(.00)	-.00(.00)	-.01 <sup>+</sup> (.00)	-.01(.00)	.01 <sup>+</sup> (.00)	.01(.01)	-.01(.00)	.01*(.00)
Gender <sup>a</sup>	-.06(.12)	-.05(.12)	-.02(.12)	.12(.11)	.13(.11)	.26*(.12)	.04(.16)	-.08 (.13)	.09(.10)
LMX	.17*(.08)	.17*(.08)	.17*(.08)	-.01(.07)	-.01(.07)	.03(.08)	.14(.09)	.15*(.07)	.13*(.06)
Individual empowering leadership	.11(.09)	.11(.10)	.11(.10)	-.06(.09)	-.06(.09)	.23*(.08)	-.11(.11)	-.03(.09)	-.11(.07)
LMX social comparison						-.04(.06)	-.20**(.07)	-.08(.06)	-.08(.05)
Empowering leadership- social comparison						.24**(.08)	.27**(.09)	.13 <sup>+</sup> (.08)	.15*(.06)
Psychological empowerment							.07(.08)	-.07(.07)	-.02(.06)

\*\* < .01, \* < .05, <sup>+</sup> < .10 (two-tailed)



**TABLE 3 – Continued**

	Empowering Leadership Social Comparison			Empower. Leadership Social Comparison (Absolute Value)		Psych. Empower.	Proactive Perform.	Adaptive Perform.	Task Perform.
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
<i>Level 2 (between-team)</i>									
Org. dummy 1	.18(.32)	.21(.32)	.23(.32)	.40(.32)	.45(.30)	.08(.31)	.37(.54)	.51(.51)	.50(.38)
Org. dummy 2	.11(.22)	.10(.21)	.07(.22)	-.01(.21)	-.03(.20)	.68**(.21)	.56(.34)	.55 <sup>+</sup> (.32)	.38(.24)
Org. dummy 3									
Org. dummy 4									
Leader company tenure	.00(.01)	.00(.01)	.00(.01)	-.00(.01)	-.00(.01)	.00(.01)	.02(.01)	.02*(.01)	-.00(.01)
Leader gender	-.10(.14)	-.07(.14)	-.08(.14)	-.11(.14)	-.04(.14)	-.13(.14)	-.12(.22)	.02(.21)	.12(.16)
Leader ethnicity	.03(.04)	.03(.04)	.03(.04)	.03(.03)	.04(.03)	.02(.03)	-.05(.05)	-.04(.05)	-.03(.04)
Task interdependence <sup>4</sup>	.10(.09)	.08(.09)	.07(.09)	.10(.08)	.06(.08)	-.00(.08)	-.05(.14)	.02(.13)	.04(.10)
Team size	.03(.02)	.03(.02)	.04(.02)	.04(.02)	.04 <sup>+</sup> (.02)	-.01(.02)	.04(.04)	.03(.03)	.04(.02)
Mean LMX	-.01(.18)	-.05(.18)	-.11(.19)	.03(.17)	-.05(.17)	.14(.18)	.13(.26)	-.14(.23)	-.08(.18)
LMX differentiation	.00(.22)	-.09(.24)	-.14(.24)	-.01(.21)	-.20(.22)	.19(.23)	.46(.34)	.15(.30)	.35(.23)
Mean empowering leadership	.02(.23)	.16(.27)	.21(.28)	.05(.22)	.32(.25)	-.13(.26)	.36(.38)	.17(.34)	.46 <sup>+</sup> (.26)
Differentiated empowering leadership		.23(.24)	.19(.24)		.47*(.23)	-.05(.23)	-.04(.36)	.01(.34)	.38(.26)
Differentiated empowering leadership Squared			.37(.39)						
Relationship Conflict						.06(.13)	-.03(.19)	-.10(.17)	-.11(.13)

\*\* < .01, \* < .05, <sup>+</sup> < .10 (two-tailed)

<sup>4</sup> For the individual- and cross-level analyses reported in Table 3, team task interdependence is reported by the team members. For all other analyses reported in this dissertation, team task interdependence is reported by the team leader.

Being that Hypothesis 1 is proposing that high differentiated empowering leadership leads to increased levels of intra-team social comparisons based on the level of empowering leadership team members receive, simply testing the direct effect of differentiated empowering leadership on empowering leadership-social comparisons is not an adequate test of Hypothesis 1. The reason for this is that the operationalization of empowering leadership-social comparison is directional in nature, meaning that individuals that engage in low levels of empowering leadership-social comparisons reported scores that are closer to the mid-point of the scale (i.e., 4). In contrast, those that engage in the highest levels of empowering leadership-social comparisons reported scores that are closer to the end-points of the scale (1 = “A lot less” empowering leadership received relative to other team members) and (7 = “A lot more” empowering leadership received relative to other team members). After testing Hypothesis 1 (see Table 3, Model 2) as it is written and finding that differentiated empowering leadership had a non-significant effect on empowering leadership-social comparison ( $\gamma = .23, p > .05$ ), I tested Hypothesis 1 by assessing whether there is a curvilinear relationship between differentiated empowering leadership and empowering leadership-social comparisons. I took this approach, because teams with high differentiated empowering leadership should result in both individuals perceiving that they receive higher levels of empowering leadership relative to their team members and other individuals perceiving that they receive lower levels of empowering leadership relative to other team members. The data revealed that the quadratic effect of differentiated empowering leadership on

empowering leadership-social comparison was also non-significant,  $\gamma = .37, p > .05$ , thus not supporting Hypothesis 1.

I also tested Hypothesis 1 using a supplemental analysis that allowed me to disregard the direction of the social comparisons and assess the extent to which differentiated empowering leadership led team members to perceive that they were receiving *more or less* levels of empowering leadership relative to other team members (see Table 3, Model 6). I did this by re-anchoring empowering leadership-social comparison with the midpoint at zero (i.e., -3 = “A lot less” to 3 = “A lot more” empowering leadership relative to other team members). From there, I took the absolute value of the scale, making the perceptions of receiving equal levels of empowering leadership relative to other team members (i.e., low levels of empowering leadership-social comparisons) the low end of the scale (i.e., zero) and the perceptions of receiving higher or lower levels of empowering leadership relative to other team members (i.e., high levels of empowering leadership-social comparisons) the high end of the scale (i.e., three). As seen in Table 3, this supplemental test revealed that differentiated empowering leadership at the team level significantly impacts the extent that team members engage in empowering leadership-social comparisons ( $\gamma = .47, p < .05$ ). Thus, I found mixed support for Hypothesis 1.

Unlike Hypothesis 1 which focuses on the extent to which empowering leadership-social comparisons are engaged in, Hypothesis 2 focuses explicitly on how the direction of one’s empowering leadership-social comparison (i.e., upward or downward) impacts his/her psychological empowerment. Specifically, Hypothesis 2

proposed that empowering leadership-social comparison will have a positive relationship on psychological empowerment above and beyond the direct effects of individual empowering leadership, LMX, and LMX social comparison. To test the unique effects of empowering leadership-social comparison suggested in Hypothesis 2, in Model 3 of Table 3 I added LMX social comparison and empowering leadership-social comparison as Level 1 predictors. I found that empowering leadership-social comparison has a significant positive relationship with psychological empowerment above and beyond the effects of individual empowering leadership, LMX, and LMX social comparisons ( $\gamma = .24, p < .01$ ). The significant relationship indicates that individuals that perceive they are receiving more empowering leadership from their team leader relative to other team members reported higher levels of psychological empowerment. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported by the data.

Hypothesis 3 posited that there would be an indirect effect between differentiated empowering leadership and individual psychological empowerment through empowering leadership-social comparison. I used Tofighi and MacKinnon's (2011) RMediation test of multilevel indirect effects of Hypothesis 3 and found the 95% confidence interval of the indirect effect included zero ( $ab = .06$ ;  $SE = .06$ ; 95% CI  $[-.06, .19]$ ). Thus, the data do not support Hypothesis 3. Nonetheless, upon further reflection, I came to the conclusion that, operationally, Hypothesis 3 is flawed because the first stage of the indirect effect (i.e., Hypothesis 1) is focused on the extent to which empowering leadership-social comparisons are engaged in, whereas, the second stage of the indirect effect (i.e., Hypothesis 2) is focused on the effects of the direction of each person's

empowering leadership-social comparisons (i.e., upward vs. downward social comparisons).

Hypothesis 4 suggested that psychological empowerment is positively related to team member proactivity. Model 6 of Table 3 discloses that psychological empowerment is not related to proactive performance,  $\gamma = .07, p > .05$ . Thus, the data do not support Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 5 posited that empowering leadership-social comparison has a positive indirect relationship with individual-level proactivity through psychological empowerment. Using Tofighi and MacKinnon's (2011) RMediation application, the data do not support Hypothesis 5 in that there is a non-significant indirect effect of empowering leadership-social comparison on individual-level proactivity through psychological empowerment ( $ab = .02$ ;  $SE = .02$ ;  $CI\ 95\% [-.02, .07]$ ).

Hypothesis 6 proposed that psychological empowerment is positively related to individual-level adaptability. Model 7 of Table 3 reveals that psychological empowerment is not related to team member adaptability ( $\gamma = -.07, p > .05$ ), thus the data do not support Hypothesis 6. Using the RMediation application, the data also do not support Hypothesis 7, which posits that empowering leadership-social comparison is indirectly related to individual-level adaptability through psychological empowerment ( $ab = -.02$ ;  $SE = .02$ ,  $CI\ 95\% [-.06, .02]$ ).

Hypothesis 8 posited that differentiated empowering leadership is positively related to team relationship conflict, above and beyond the effects of LMX

differentiation<sup>5</sup>. Being that a couple teams were led by the same team leader and teams were nested within companies, I analyzed the team-level hypotheses using RCM to account for the lack of randomness across the teams. As shown in Model 2 of Table 4, the data do not support Hypothesis 8, in that differentiated empowering leadership does not significantly impact team relationship conflict ( $\gamma = .27, p > .05$ ).

Hypothesis 9 proposed that teams with task interdependence will display a stronger relationship between differentiated empowering leadership and team relationship conflict. As displayed in Model 3 of Table 4, the data do not support Hypothesis 9 ( $\gamma = .20, p > .05$ ).

Hypothesis 10 noted that differentiated empowering leadership negatively impacts team proactive performance through team relationship conflict. Using the RMediation application for testing indirect effects of multilevel data, there was no significant indirect effect between differentiated empowering leadership and team proactive performance through relationship conflict ( $ab = .06, SE = .11, 95\% CI [-.11, .32]$ ). With both Hypothesis 9 and 10 not being supported, Hypothesis 11, which posited that the indirect effect of differentiated empowering leadership on team proactive performance through team relationship conflict would be moderated by team task performance, also could not be supported.

Hypothesis 12 stated that differentiated empowering leadership is indirectly related to team adaptive performance through team relationship conflict. The data

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<sup>5</sup> Using a more stringent data inclusion criteria, the data support Hypothesis 8 and subsequently reveal that team relationship conflict negatively impacts team performance (see Appendix C).

**TABLE 4** – RCM Analyses of Team-level Effects

	<b>Relationship Conflict</b>			<b>Proactive Performance</b>	<b>Adaptive Performance</b>	<b>Task Performance</b>
	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>
Constant	1.87**(.35)	1.81**(.36)	1.88**(.36)	5.63**(.59)	5.41**(.61)	5.73**(.40)
<i><b>Level 2 (between-team)</b></i>						
Org. dummy 1	-.00(.49)	.03(.51)	.13(.49)	.62(.83)	.21(.88)	.71(.57)
Org. dummy 2	-.34(.36)	-.33(.36)	-.28(.35)	.05(.58)	.02(.88)	-.02(.41)
Org. dummy 3	.65(.40)	.71(.41)	.68 <sup>+</sup> (.40)	-1.14(.68)	-.58(.68)	-.35(.47)
Org. dummy 4	.06(.30)	.07(.30)	.09(.29)	.06(.49)	-.00(.51)	.10(.33)
Leader company tenure	-.00(.01)	-.00(.01)	-.00(.01)	-.02(.01)	-.00(.01)	-.01(.01)
Leader gender	.09(.15)	.12(.15)	.09(.15)	.26(.24)	.11(.24)	.36*(.18)
Leader ethnicity	.00(.04)	.00(.04)	-.00(.04)	.00(.07)	.13 <sup>+</sup> (.07)	.03(.05)
Task interdependence	.11 <sup>+</sup> (.06)	.10 <sup>+</sup> (.06)	.09(.06)	.19 <sup>+</sup> (.10)	.09(.10)	.05(.07)
Team size	-.01(.03)	-.01(.03)	-.02(.03)	-.02(.04)	.03(.04)	.02(.03)
Mean company tenure	-.01(.03)	-.01(.03)	-.00(.03)	.09 <sup>+</sup> (.05)	.04(.05)	.04(.03)
Differentiated company tenure	-.00(.03)	-.00(.03)	.00(.03)	-.01(.04)	-.02(.04)	.01(.03)
Mean industry tenure	.02(.02)	.02(.02)	.02(.02)	-.06 <sup>+</sup> (.03)	-.00(.03)	.00(.03)
Differentiated industry tenure	-.03(.02)	-.04(.02)	-.04 <sup>+</sup> (.02)	-.03(.04)	-.04(.03)	-.04(.03)
Mean LMX	-.13(.18)	-.15(.18)	-.15(.17)	-.06(.28)	.44(.26)	-.12(.21)
LMX differentiation	.16(.23)	.07(.24)	.13(.25)	.41(.38)	.15(.34)	-.11(.28)
Mean empowering leadership	-.05(.22)	.06(.26)	.03(.26)	.74 <sup>+</sup> (.41)	.11(.39)	.47(.30)
Differentiated empowering leadership		.27(.29)	.25(.28)	.21(.46)	.66(.45)	.75*(.33)
Relationship Conflict				.22(.22)	-.27(.21)	-.08(.16)
Differentiated empowering leadership X Team interdependence			.20(.16)			

\*\* < .01, \* < .05, <sup>+</sup> < .10 (two-tailed)

do not support Hypothesis 12 ( $ab = -.07$ ,  $SE = .12$ , 95% CI  $[-.36, .11]$ ). With both Hypotheses 9 and 12 not supported, Hypothesis 13, which posited that the indirect effect of differentiated empowering leaderships on team adaptive performance through team relationship conflict is moderated by team task interdependence, also could not be supported by the data.

Hypothesis 14 proposed that team relationship conflict is negatively related to individual psychological empowerment. Using RCM to analyze the cross-level effect, results in Model 7 of Table 3 reveal that team relationship conflict does not impact individual psychological empowerment ( $\gamma = .06$ ,  $p > .05$ ). Thus, the data do not support Hypothesis 14. As a result, the data also do not support Hypothesis 15, which posits that differentiated empowering leadership is indirectly related to individual psychological empowerment through team relationship conflict ( $ab = .02$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI  $[-.07, .12]$ ). Finally, the data do not support Hypotheses 16a or 16b, which posit that team relationship conflict is indirectly related to individual proactivity and individual adaptability through individual psychological empowerment ( $ab = .01$ ,  $SE = .02$ , 95% CI  $[-.02, .04]$  and  $ab = -.05$ ,  $SE = .01$ , 95% CI  $[-.04, .02]$ , respectively).

### **Post-hoc Analyses**

Although the data do not support a majority of my proposed theoretical model, I conducted some post-hoc analyses to see if there were other theoretical mechanisms through which differentiated empowering leadership might impact team or individual performance. Leveraging Kahn's (1990) theory of engagement, I tested how



differentiated empowering leadership impacts team and individual performance through team engagement and individual engagement. Based on recent research on collective organizational engagement (Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, & Courtright, 2015), I conceptualized team engagement as *the shared perceptions of team members that the team, as a whole, is physically, cognitively, and emotionally invested in its work*. Similarly, individual engagement occurs when individuals “harness their full selves in active, complete work role performances by driving personal energy into physical, cognitive, and emotional labors” (Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010, p. 619). With the theoretical assumption that differentiated empowering leadership undermines the three conditions required to experience engagement (i.e., meaningfulness, psychological safety, and resource availability; Kahn, 1990) at the team and individual levels of analysis, I tested whether differentiated empowering leadership negatively impacts team collective engagement and individual engagement, above and beyond the effects of LMX differentiation.

At the team level of analysis, the data reveal that differentiated empowering leadership is negatively related to the team’s collective perceptions of team engagement<sup>6</sup> ( $r = -.57, p < .01$ ). Using RCM analyses, Model 2 in Table 5 shows that while controlling for LMX differentiation, differentiated empowering leadership negatively

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<sup>6</sup> Following past research on collective organizational engagement, I operationalized team engagement by shifting the referent of the engagement scale developed by Rich et al. (2010) and later shortened by Barrick et al. (2015) from the organization to the team (see Barrick et al., 2015). Thus, in the second team member survey I asked the team members to rate their individual perception of their team’s collective engagement (see Appendix B for the items;  $\alpha = .93$ ). From there, I aggregated the team members’ responses to create a shared perception of the team’s overall engagement ( $r_{wg(j)} = .86$ ,  $ICC(1) = .15$ , and  $ICC(2) = .43$ ).

impacts team engagement ( $\gamma = -.87, p < .01$ ), which in turn positively influences team learning<sup>7</sup> ( $\gamma = .46, p < .05$ ; see Model 3 in Table 5). Team learning is another form of team adaptive performance (Pulakos et al., 2000), because it entails team members altering the team's processes for the purposes of recognizing and overcoming

**TABLE 5** – RCM Analyses of Post-hoc Team-level Effects Using All Teams

	Team Engagement		Team Learning
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Constant	5.45**(.38)	5.63**(.36)	5.52**(.51)
<i>Level 2 (between-team)</i>			
Org. dummy 1	-.47(.53)	-.63(.50)	-.09(.71)
Org. dummy 2	.54(.39)	.47(.36)	-.45(.52)
Org. dummy 3	-.49(.42)	-.70 <sup>+</sup> (.40)	-.56(.58)
Org. dummy 4	-.40(.32)	-.47(.30)	-.17(.43)
Leader company tenure	.00(.01)	.00(.01)	-.01(.01)
Leader gender	-.03(.16)	-.13(.15)	-.04(.22)
Leader ethnicity	.05(.05)	.05(.04)	.01(.06)
Task interdependence	.08(.07)	.10(.06)	.36**(.09)
Team size	-.01(.03)	-.01(.03)	-.02(.04)
Mean company tenure	-.02(.03)	-.01(.03)	.08(.04)
Differentiated company tenure	-.03(.03)	-.04(.03)	-.06(.04)
Mean industry tenure	-.00(.02)	-.01(.02)	-.04(.03)
Differentiated industry tenure	.04(.03)	.07*(.03)	.01(.04)
Mean LMX	.25(.19)	.33 <sup>+</sup> (.18)	.04(.26)
LMX differentiation	-.26(.25)	.01(.24)	.02(.35)
Mean empowering leadership	-.22(.24)	-.20(.26)	.05(.37)
Differentiated empowering leadership		-.89**(.29)	.11(.45)
Team Engagement			.46*(.20)
Differentiated empowering leadership X Team interdependence			
Team Engagement X Task Interdependence			

\*\* < .01, \* < .05, <sup>+</sup> < .10 (two-tailed)

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<sup>7</sup> Team learning was operationalized using Van der Vegt and Bunderson's (2005) four-item scale. I asked team leaders to rate each team with regards to its collective learning (see Appendix B for the items;  $\alpha = .81$ ).

weaknesses in order to augment team performance (Johnson, 2003). Specifically, team learning is defined as team behaviors focused on refining, acquiring, sharing, and combining task-relevant knowledge as a means of overcoming weaknesses to attain optimal performance (Van der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005). According to Tofighi and MacKinnon's (2011) RMediation test of multi-level indirect effects, the indirect effect between differentiated empowering leadership and team learning through team engagement is significant ( $ab = -.40$ ;  $SE = .23$ ; 95% C.I.  $[-.92, -.04]$ ).

A second team-level finding is that team task interdependence moderates the indirect effect between differentiated empowering leadership and team performance<sup>8</sup> through team engagement, while controlling for both LMX differentiation and team cohesion. Model 4 of Table 6 indicates that team engagement and task interdependence interact to impact team performance ( $b = .22, p < .05$ )<sup>9</sup>, while team task interdependence does not moderate the relationship between differentiated empowering leadership and team engagement (see Model 3 of Table 6). A simple slopes analysis of the data (see Figure 2) displays that highly engaged teams perform better when they have higher levels of task interdependence ( $b = .39, p < .05$ ) relative to when they have lower levels of task interdependence ( $b = -.18, p > .05$ ).

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<sup>8</sup> I asked team leaders to evaluate their team's performance using six-items that were developed by Griffin et al. (2007) and Edmondson (1999). These items are reported in Appendix B ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

<sup>9</sup> The moderating effect of task interdependence on the indirect effect of differentiated empowering leadership on team performance through team engagement is only significant when the sample consists of teams with three or more team members, reducing my sample to 62 teams.

**TABLE 6** – RCM Analyses of Post-hoc Team-level Effects Using Only Teams with Three or More Team Members

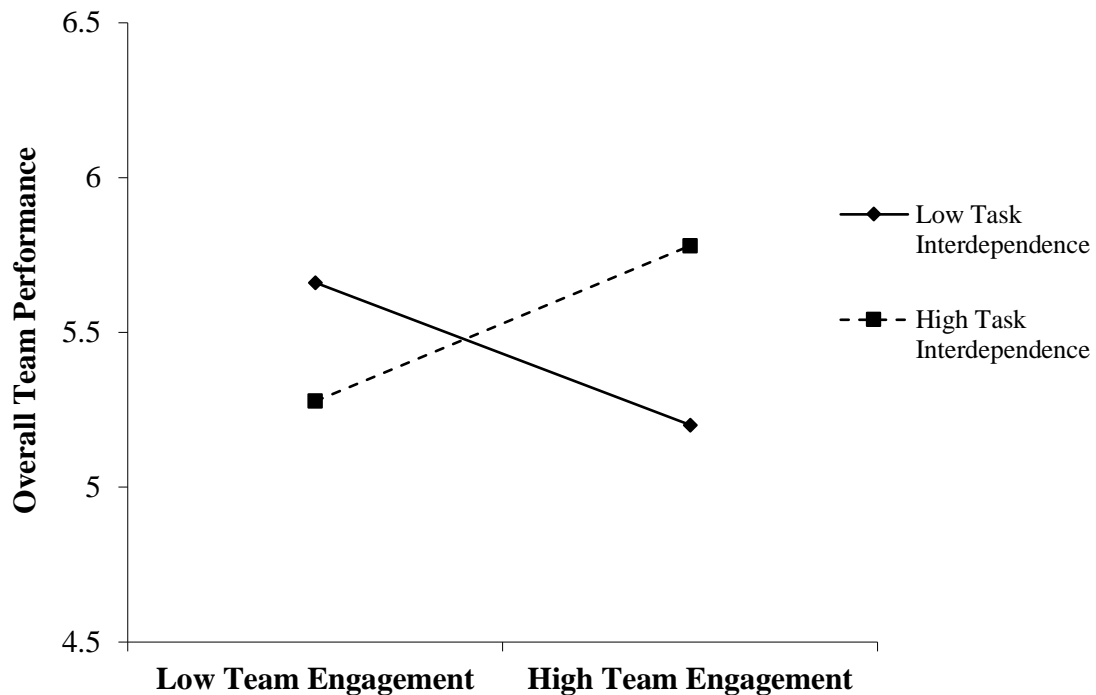
	Team Engagement			Team Performance
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Constant	5.18**(.30)	5.31**(.31)	5.31**(.31)	5.57**(.37)
<i>Level 2 (between-team)</i>				
Org. dummy 1	.19(.41)	.15(.41)	.14(.41)	.39(.48)
Org. dummy 2	.70(.29)	.70(.29)	.70(.29)	-.26(.38)
Org. dummy 3	.23(.33)	.07(.34)	.05(.35)	-.65(.41)
Org. dummy 4	.03(.24)	-.01(.24)	-.01(.24)	.24(.28)
Leader company tenure	.00(.00)	.00(.01)	-.00(.01)	-.01(.01)
Leader gender	.07(.13)	.02(.13)	.03(.13)	.28 <sup>+</sup> (.16)
Leader ethnicity	-.01(.03)	-.02(.03)	-.02(.03)	.07 <sup>+</sup> (.04)
Task interdependence	.06(.05)	.06(.05)	.06(.05)	.00(.06)
Team size	-.05*(.02)	-.05*(.02)	-.05 <sup>+</sup> (.02)	.02(.03)
Company tenure diversity <sup>10</sup>	.01(.01)	.01 <sup>+</sup> (.00)	.01 <sup>+</sup> (.01)	-.01(.01)
Mean LMX	.19(.15)	.31 <sup>+</sup> (.15)	.32 <sup>+</sup> (.16)	.10(.23)
LMX differentiation	-.01(.18)	.23(.20)	.24(.21)	.20(.27)
Mean empowering leadership	-.03(.21)	-.31(.23)	-.31(.23)	.57 <sup>+</sup> (.30)
Team cohesion	.64**(.12)	.58**(.12)	.57**(.12)	-.12(.19)
Differentiated empowering leadership		-.56*(.24)	-.57*(.25)	.11 (.19)
Team Engagement				.11(.19)
Differentiated empowering leadership X Team interdependence			-.03(.13)	
Team Engagement X Task Interdependence				.22*(.09)

\*\* < .01, \* < .05, <sup>+</sup> < .10 (two-tailed)

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<sup>10</sup> To account for the differential levels of company tenure within each team, I followed past research (Van der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005) and used the coefficient of variation (standard deviation divided by the mean) for company tenure within the team as it has been linked to team performance (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992).

**FIGURE 2** – Interaction Between Team Engagement and Team Task Interdependence on Overall Team Performance



Additional exploratory analyses revealed that differentiated empowering leadership also affects individual engagement<sup>11</sup> and subsequently adaptability at the individual-level of analysis. Model 2 of Table 7 displays that differentiated empowering leadership has a significant cross-level negative effect on individual engagement ( $\gamma = -.52, p < .05$ ). Moreover, the results in Model 3 of Table 7 show that team engagement significantly impacts individual engagement ( $\gamma = .43, p < .01$ ), which in turn has a positive effect on individual adaptability ( $\gamma = .14, p < .05$ ; see Model 5 of Table 7).

<sup>11</sup> In the second team member survey I asked team members to rate their individual engagement using Barrick et al.'s (2015) shortened engagement scale, but the referent was changed to be focused on the individual (see Appendix B for the items;  $\alpha = .92$ ).

Furthermore, a multilevel test of indirect effects (Tofighi & MacKinnon, 2011) shows that differentiated empowering leadership has a significant indirect effect on individual engagement through team engagement ( $ab = -.37$ ;  $SE = .18$ ; 95% CI  $[-.77, -.09]$ ). The data also reveal that the indirect effect of team engagement on individual adaptability through individual engagement is significant ( $ab = .06$ ;  $SE = .03$ ; 95% CI  $[.01, .13]$ ). Notably, all of the cross- and individual-level relationships are significant while controlling for LMX differentiation and LMX (see Tables 4 and 5), showing that differentiated empowering leadership is distinct from LMX differentiation and has multi-level additive effects on team and individual performance.

**TABLE 7 – RCM Analyses of Post-hoc Individual-level Effects**<sup>12</sup>

	Individual Engagement			Individual Adaptability	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Constant	5.40** (.40)	5.53** (.39)	5.33** (.37)	5.59** (.49)	5.71** (.49)
<i>Level 1 (within-team)</i>					
Company tenure	.01(.01)	.01(.01)	.01(.01)	-.00(.01)	-.00(.01)
Age	.02**(.01)	.01**(.01)	.01*(.01)	-.01(.00)	-.01 <sup>+</sup> (.00)
Gender	.13(.13)	.11(.13)	.16(.12)	-.15(.12)	-.17(.12)
Education	-.00(.05)	.02(.05)	.03(.05)	.07(.05)	.07(.05)
Proactive personality	.45**(.07)	.46**(.07)	.43**(.07)	.01(.06)	-.06(.06)
Individual engagement					.14*(.06)
<i>Level 2 (between-team)</i>					
Org. dummy 1	.26(.46)	.19(.44)	.25(.40)	.97 <sup>+</sup> (.59)	.93(.59)
Org. dummy 2	.05(.34)	-.12(.34)	.15(.31)	-.31(.45)	-.39(.46)
Org. dummy 3	.04(.25)	-.01(.24)	.14(.22)	.39(.34)	.34(.34)
Org. dummy 4	.44(.33)	.38(.32)	.13(.30)	.80 <sup>+</sup> (.42)	.82 <sup>+</sup> (.43)
Leader company tenure	-.01(.01)	-.01(.01)	-.01(.01)	.02 <sup>+</sup> (.01)	.02 <sup>+</sup> (.01)
Leader gender	.12(.15)	.06(.14)	.05(.14)	.03(.19)	-.00(.18)
Leader ethnicity	-.01(.04)	-.01(.04)	-.01(.03)	-.05(.04)	-.05(.04)
Task interdependence	.08(.06)	.09(.06)	.06(.06)	-.01(.07)	-.01(.07)
Team size	-.04 <sup>+</sup> (.03)	-.04 <sup>+</sup> (.02)	-.04(.02)	.03(.03)	.03(.03)
Mean LMX	.05(.18)	.15(.18)	.05(.17)	.04(.21)	-.06(.21)
LMX differentiation	.14(.23)	.32(.24)	.31(.23)	-.01(.27)	-.04(.27)
Mean empowering leadership	.11(.22)	-.20(.27)	-.19(.25)	-.13(.31)	-.10(.31)
Differentiated empowering leadership		-.52*(.26)	-.25(.25)	-.13(.32)	-.17(.34)
Team engagement			.43**(.12)		-.15(.16)

\*\* < .01, \* < .05, <sup>+</sup> < .10 (two-tailed)

<sup>12</sup> The effects in this Table retain their significance whether I include all of the teams in the analyses or I include only teams with three or more team members.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

#### Overview of Results

In my dissertation I set out to understand the impact of differentiated empowering leadership on team dynamic performance, individual motivation, and individual dynamic performance. As shown in Chapter 3, the data I collected largely do not support the proposed multilevel theoretical model. For instance, despite the fact that differentiated empowering leadership is significantly correlated with relationship conflict ( $r = .26, p < .05$ ), subsequent analyses show that the impact of differentiated empowering leadership on relationship conflict fade when controlling for LMX differentiation, which has a stronger relationship with relationship conflict ( $r = .35, p < .05$ ). Although psychological empowerment was significantly correlated to individual proactivity ( $r = .13, p < .05$ ), that relationship also faded when controlling for empowering leadership-social comparison and LMX. In contrast to prior research (de Wit et al., 2012; Seibert et al., 2014), the data show that psychological empowerment is not related to task performance ( $r = .07, p > .05$ ), and relationship conflict is not correlated with team proactivity ( $r = .07, p > .05$ ) or team performance ( $r = .03, p > .05$ ).

Overall, the data show that differentiated empowering leadership does not impact relationship conflict or in turn team proactivity or team adaptability, above and beyond LMX differentiation. In addition, team task interdependence does not moderate the relationship between differentiated empowering leadership and team relationship conflict. Nonetheless, the data do provide mixed support as to whether differentiated



empowering leadership impacts the extent to which team members perceive that they are receiving higher or lower levels of empowering leadership relative to other team members (i.e., empowering leadership-social comparison). In addition, the data show a robust relationship between the direction of empowering leadership-social comparison and individuals' psychological empowerment, above and beyond the direct effects of empowering leadership, LMX, and LMX social comparison ( $\gamma = .23, p < .01$ ). That relationship reveals that team members that perceive they are receiving more empowering leadership than other team members experience enhanced psychological empowerment a month later, while controlling for the direct effects of individual empowering leadership, LMX, and LMX social comparison. Nevertheless, psychological empowerment did not significantly impact either individual proactivity or adaptability, above and beyond the control variables. The latter non-significant findings are likely due to the fact that empowering leadership-social comparison is such a strong predictor of the individual-level performance variables (e.g., individual proactivity [ $\gamma = .26, p < .01$ ]; task performance [ $\gamma = .13, p < .05$ ]), thus leaving limited variance that could be predicted by psychological empowerment. Furthermore, LMX-social comparison also significantly predicts individual proactivity ( $\gamma = -.13, p < .05$ ), further reducing the available variance that could be predicted by psychological empowerment. Although empowering leadership-social comparison is not operating through psychological empowerment to impact individual dynamic performance, it is still impacting the proactive and task performance of the team members. Thus, it is possible

that empowering leadership-social comparison is impacting individual proactivity and task performance through other mechanisms outside of psychological empowerment.

Although a large portion of my proposed model was not supported by the data, there may be other mechanisms outside of team relationship conflict and psychological empowerment through which differentiated empowering leadership influences team- and individual-level performance. As a result, I conducted some post-hoc analyses to explore whether there are other mechanisms through which differentiated empowering leadership might impact team and individual-level performance. The data showed that differentiated empowering leadership has a strong negative impact on team engagement. Subsequently, I found that team engagement positively impacts team learning and interacts with team task interdependence to impact overall team performance. Finally, I discovered that differentiated empowering leadership also has a negative direct and indirect effect on individual engagement (through team engagement), which subsequently leads to enhanced levels of individual adaptive performance.

While there are some insightful findings from the data, being that very few of my proposed hypotheses were supported by the data, in the next section I delve into potential theoretical, empirical, and methodological reasons for why the data do not support a large portion of my proposed model.

### **Explanation of Findings and Non-Findings**

**Theoretical explanation of findings and non-findings.** To begin, there may be a couple theoretical reasons for why the data do not support most of my hypotheses.

First, differentiated empowering leadership may not be viewed negatively by team members of certain teams, especially if the team members perceive the differential empowering leadership as justified or merited. For example, team members may perceive that individual team members who are more competent *should* receive more empowering leadership from their team leader. As a result, team members that perceive the differentiated empowering leadership as warranted may not respond with animosity or distain toward the team members who are receiving more empowering leadership. Furthermore, it is possible that there are other attributions, outside of perceived competence, that team members may make when they perceive that their team leader is giving more or less empowering leadership to another team member. For instance, team members may perceive that another team member is receiving higher (or lower) levels of relative empowering leadership, because that person shares a higher (or lower) level of goal congruence with the team leader (Yukl, 1999) or because that person is not ready to receive higher levels of empowering leadership (Ahearne e al., 2005), thus the best means of development for that team member is to provide him/her with more directive leadership (i.e., less empowering leadership). Along these lines, task interdependence may not have interacted with differentiated empowering leadership to impact relationship conflict because teams that frequently work together to accomplish their tasks are likely better apt to see the merit or justification behind giving another team member more or less empowering leadership relative to other members of the team.

A second potential theoretical shortcoming of my model is that I assumed that because past research has shown that competence-based social comparisons generate

interpersonal animosity at the dyadic level (Wood, 1989), the same pattern would generalize and emerge at the team level of analysis. Specifically, I theorized that differentiated empowering leadership would lead to team relationship conflict, because of the competence-based social comparisons that would occur within teams as a result of differentiated empowering leadership. Nevertheless, the data reveal differentiated empowering leadership did not generate team relationship conflict. This could be for a couple reasons. First, I only found partial support that differentiated empowering leadership leads to team members perceiving that they receive more or less empowering leadership from their team leader relative to other team members (e.g., empowering leadership-social comparisons), thus it is possible that differentiated empowering leadership did not generate a sufficient amount of empowering leadership-social comparisons to produce interpersonal relationship problems within the team. Without a sufficient level of empowering leadership-social comparisons among team members, the members would experience limited, if any, interpersonal animosity within the team. Second, it is also possible that empowering leadership received is not perceived by employees as a strong indicator of their competence or even the competence of other team members (i.e., other members may prescribe other attributions or reasons for why a team member receives more or less empowering leadership), which would mean that social comparisons with regard to empowering leadership are less likely to lead to interpersonal animosity between team members (Wood, 1989). Finally, it is possible that the animosity felt due to upward-focused social comparisons is limited to dyadic phenomena and is less generalizable to the team level of analysis.

A final theoretical shortcoming is that self-determination theory may not be the proper theory to integrate with social comparison theory to understand the effects of differentiated empowering leadership. I founded much of my model's theory on self-determination theory's three universal needs (e.g., competence, autonomy, and relatedness) to explain why team members would engage in contrast-based social comparisons and thereby respond with animosity and frustration to intra-team social comparisons with regards to empowering leadership. Nonetheless, it is possible that the perception of empowering leadership is not perceived by some team members as a strong enough satisfier of the universal needs highlighted in SDT to where empowering leadership becomes important to their self-definitions. If empowering leadership, or possibly even the universal needs within SDT, are not close to the team members' self-definitions, then social comparison theorists would argue that individuals would likely engage in more constructive, reflective-based social comparisons rather than destructive, contrast-based social comparisons with regards to the empowering leadership they each receive from their team leader (Tesser, 1988; Wood, 1989). If this is the case, then differentiated empowering leadership is unlikely to generate relationship conflict within the team.

**Empirical explanations for findings and non-findings.** Related to this point is an empirical reason for why differentiated empowering leadership did not generate higher levels of team relationship conflict. In calculating the  $r_{wg(j)}$  statistics for each team, I was able to see that most teams that exhibited relatively high levels of

differentiated empowering leadership only had one or two team members that rated their team leader as exhibiting lower levels of empowering leadership toward them, with a vast majority of the team members receiving similar levels of high empowering leadership (indicated by the relatively high  $r_{wg(j)}$  statistic). As a result, there is not a lot of differentiated empowering leadership in the sample that I collected, which likely inhibited me from finding significant effects. In addition, it may be that for differentiated empowering leadership to produce a meaningful amount of relationship conflict in a team, there is a threshold that is required in which *more than* one or even two team members – the actual threshold is probably contingent on the team's size – may need to experience lower levels of empowering leadership relative to other team members. In other words, to generate strong enough negative social comparisons to produce relationship conflict across an entire team, there may need to be more than just one or possibly two people that receive significantly different levels of empowering leadership from the leader, with larger teams needing more members receiving differential empowering leadership.

Another potential empirical reason for why the data do not support many of my hypotheses is that the mean level of empowering leadership and differentiated empowering leadership are highly correlated ( $r = -.75$ ). According to Cole et al. (2011), to partition out the unique effects of differentiated variables on a criterion, I must control for the mean-based level of that variable (e.g., mean empowering leadership), because the two variables are curvilinearly interdependent (i.e., differentiated empowering leadership is low when the mean level of empowering leadership is high or low). On that

note, Cole and colleagues also note that when the mean and differentiated variables are highly correlated, there is systematic range restriction in the differentiated variable, which can be so severe “that unique variance attributable to a [differentiated] variable may be statistically inaccessible (Lindell & Brandt, 2000)” (p. 723) due to severe underestimation. Being that the correlation between differentiated empowering leadership and the mean-level of empowering leadership is strongly negative ( $r = -.75$ ), the left-hand side of the symmetrically curvilinear distribution between the two variables is restricted, which leaves a limited portion of the distribution to act as a predictor of relationship conflict. As a result, it is likely that the range restriction caused by controlling for the mean level of empowering leadership is precluding the effects of differentiated empowering leadership from impacting team relationship conflict. For comparison purposes, studies that have examined the team-level effects of LMX differentiation have reported mean and dispersion correlations of LMX of  $r = -.27$  (Li & Liao, 2014) and  $r = -.41$  (Harris et al., 2014), which display less range restriction and a stronger likelihood of being able to partition out the unique effects of LMX differentiation. In this same vein, Bliese (2000) noted that team-level variables with low ICC(2) values (i.e., reliabilities of the team mean) have limited between-team variance. As a result, those variables are likely to display relationships with other study variables that are underestimated, which may be why relationship conflict ( $ICC[2] = .55$ ) did not significantly impact any of the team-level performance outcomes.

The strong negative correlation between differentiated empowering leadership and the team-mean level of individual empowerment is important to explore, because of

its potential impact on my analyses. The strong negative correlation indicates that teams with higher levels of differentiated empowering leadership (i.e., team members are receiving unique levels of individual empowering leadership from the team leader), also reported lower levels of team-mean individual empowering leadership. This is likely because a large majority of the subjects reported receiving higher levels of individual empowering leadership within the sample. In turn, most of the teams with lower levels of differentiated empowering leadership consisted of team members that reported receiving higher levels of individual empowering leadership from their leader. Furthermore, there were very few teams that displayed lower levels of differentiated empowering leadership that had team members that reported receiving lower levels of individual empowering leadership from their team leader.

**Methodological explanations for findings and non-findings.** There are a couple issues with regard to the research methods I employed to collect the data that likely impacted my results too. For instance, after I had administered one of the team member surveys within two companies, a potential flaw in how I was asking team members to evaluate empowering leadership-social comparison came to my attention. Although at the time I was using the same approach to measure empowering leadership-social comparison that prior researchers had used in measuring LMX-social comparison (Vidyarathi et al., 2010), it came to my attention that that particular approach systematically restricted the range of the measure and thus did not capture both upward and downward social comparisons with regards to the empowering leadership individuals received relative to other team members. For example, the initial scale



included a typical 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree) using the following subset of items: “My team leader gives me more high quality responsibilities than he/she gives most of my other team members,” “My team leader lets me control my activities more than he/she lets other team members control their activities,” and “My team leader tells me to expect more from myself than he/she tells most of my other team members to expect from themselves.” The fundamental shortcoming of this approach is that the items were not capturing when individuals receive equal versus less empowering leadership relative to their team members. For example, if subjects answered “strongly disagree” to these questions, then I would not know whether they were reporting that their team leader was giving them equal levels of empowering leadership relative to their team members or lower levels of empowering leadership relative to their team members.

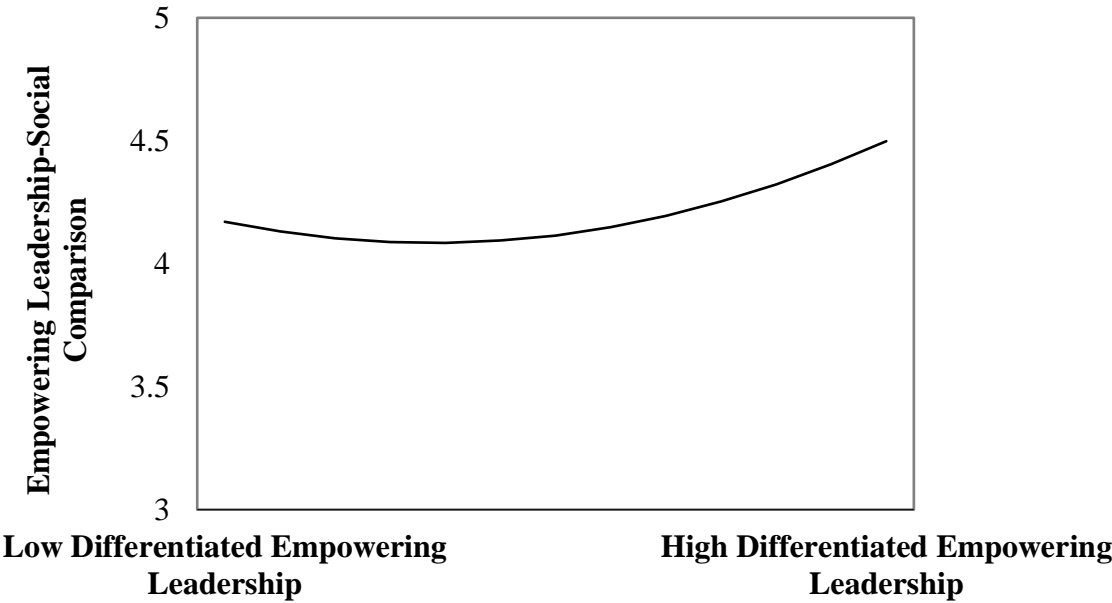
Once I became aware of the systematic range restriction inherent in the approach used in the LMX literature, I altered the scale in two ways to resolve the problem. First, I changed the Likert scale (1 = “A Lot Less” to 7 = “A Lot More”) to better capture both the upward and downward social comparison perceptions. Second, I altered the wording of each item to better capture the relative differences of empowering leadership received across team members. For example, I asked the following sample items: “Relative to other members of your team, how many responsibilities does your team leader give you?,” “Relative to other members of your team, how much does your team leader let you control your work activities?,” and “Relative to other members of your team, how much does your team leader tell you to expect a lot from yourself?” While this change in

operationalization resolved the range restriction problem, it also resulted in losing 55 team members (nine teams) from my individual-level analyses, because I either never collected the revised empowering leadership-social comparison scale from them ( $n = 27$ ) or it was collected at Time 2 ( $n = 28$ ), rather than at Time 1. Although the individual-level analyses were impacted by this methodological issue because empowering leadership-social comparison is in all individual-level analyses, all team members and teams were retained for the team-level analyses, because those teams completed all necessary variables for those analyses.

In addition, there is some concern for the sample size of the team-level effects. Although I have a sample of 69 teams with complete data (a modest sample size for a field study on teams), the statistical power of my analyses would be improved by adding more teams to the sample. Finally, another limitation of the research design is that the data collection is cross-sectional in nature, which likely led to common method variance and in turn inflated relationships among my primary variables and some of my control variables. For example, individual-focused empowering leadership, LMX, empowering leadership-social comparison, LMX-social comparison were rated at the same time by the same source, which likely inflated the intercorrelations between the variables (e.g., individual-focused empowering leadership and LMX were correlated at .76, differentiated empowering leadership and LMX differentiation were correlated at .66, and empowering leadership-social comparison and LMX-social comparison were correlated at .50). As a result, when I control for LMX differentiation and LMX-social comparison, the predictive validity of differentiated empowering leadership and

empowering leadership-social comparison is restricted, which limits the likelihood of finding significant effects.

**FIGURE 3** – Curvilinear Relationship Between Differentiated Empowering Leadership and Empowering Leadership-Social Comparison



Finally, another limitation of the research design is that the data collection is cross-sectional in nature, which likely led to common method variance and in turn inflated relationships among my primary variables and some of my control variables. For example, individual-focused empowering leadership, LMX, empowering leadership-social comparison, LMX-social comparison were rated at the same time by the same source, which likely inflated the intercorrelations between the variables (e.g., individual-focused empowering leadership and LMX were correlated at .76, differentiated empowering leadership and LMX differentiation were correlated at .66, and empowering

leadership-social comparison and LMX-social comparison were correlated at .50). As a result, when I control for LMX differentiation and LMX-social comparison, the predictive validity of differentiated empowering leadership and empowering leadership-social comparison is restricted, which limits the likelihood of finding significant effects.

To adjust for the potential impact of common method variance between empowering leadership and LMX, I conducted a supplemental analysis of my model and controlled for LMX and LMX-social comparison collected at time 2, instead of time 1 (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The intercorrelations between the variables decreased (e.g., individual-focused empowering leadership and LMX were correlated at .59, differentiated empowering leadership and LMX differentiation were correlated at .51, and empowering leadership-social comparison and LMX-social comparison were correlated at .37). Nevertheless, all of the team-level analyses remained non-significant, but the cross-level analysis between differentiated empowering leadership and empowering leadership-social comparison became marginally significant. For example, using a one-tailed test, differentiated empowering leadership and differentiated empowering leadership squared both marginally predicted empowering leadership-social comparison ( $\gamma = .37, p = .09$  and  $\gamma = .63, p = .07$ , respectively). Providing additional support for Hypothesis 1, Figure 3 displays that differentiated empowering leadership has a U-shaped curvilinear effect on empowering leadership-social comparison. In addition, empowering leadership-social comparison continued to significantly predict psychological empowerment ( $\gamma = .15, p < .05$ ). These findings indicate that common method variance between empowering leadership and LMX likely impacted some of the

relationships in my theoretical model. Following a similar rationale, there is also a possibility that team members' affect when they completed the empowering leadership scale inflated the ratings they reported about their leaders.

### **Future Directions**

Despite the data not supporting most of my theoretical model, there are still multiple future directions for research with regards to differentiated empowering leadership. First, I intend to explore other theoretical mechanisms through which differentiated empowering leadership impacts team and individual-level performance. For example, my post-hoc analyses indicate that differentiated empowering leadership impacts team learning and performance through team engagement, as well as individual adaptability through individual engagement. This is likely due to the fact that differentiated empowering leadership compromises the three conditions required for individuals and collectives to experience engagement (i.e., meaningfulness, psychological safety, and availability; see Barrick et al., 2015; Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). This particular finding is compelling, because it reveals that differentiated empowering leadership has unique effects on team and individual motivation and performance above and beyond LMX differentiation (and in one case team cohesion). It also reveals that there is a dark-side of empowering leadership, as well as introduces the concept of team-level engagement to the management literature.

Second, in this dissertation I primarily focused on the negative effects of differentiated empowering leadership. Nonetheless, there may be situations in which

differentiated empowering leadership generates positive outcomes. For instance, teams that perceive the differentiated empowering leadership exhibited by a leader as justified or merited may function more optimally than teams that perceive the differentiated empowering leadership as not justified or merited. Along these lines, future research could capture this idea by taking a social networking approach (Oh, Chung, & Labianca, 2004) and asking members about whether the empowering leadership each of their colleagues receives is merited and subsequently assessing how that perspective impacts individual and team motivation and subsequent performance. In addition, if team members perceive their leader as highly charismatic (Conger & Kanungo, 1987), then their belief in the leader's vision and personal morals may allow the leader's differentiated empowering leadership to be viewed as acceptable (Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003), because the behavior is perceived as being what is best for the good of the team.

Third, this study was focused on the outcomes of differentiated empowering leadership, but future research should also investigate the factors that influence why team leaders differentially empower their team members. Past research has discovered that leaders delegate responsibilities to individuals that they perceive are more competent and with whom they share common values (Yukl, 1999), but delegation is only one dimension of empowering leadership (Pearce & Sims, 2002), and there are other potential predictors of empowering leadership that could still be explored. For example, taking a followership perspective, future research could explore whether employees' behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behaviors or voice behaviors,

impact the level of empowering leadership the leader gives to employees. Also, it would be interesting to explore how team member centrality in the team impacts the likelihood of team leader differentiated empowering leadership.

Fourth, future research would also be benefitted by analyzing potential moderators that may clarify the relationships between differentiated empowering leadership and team relationship conflict and empowering leadership-social comparisons. For example, there is research indicating that individuals vary in the extent to which they are ready for empowerment (Ahearne et al., 2005) as well as the extent to which they need autonomy (Morris & Snyder, 1979). Furthermore, additional research shows that some individuals have a stronger proclivity to engage in social comparisons than other individuals (Gibbons & Buunk, 1999). Thus, it would be enlightening to evaluate whether these forms of individual differences impact the relationships that differentiated empowering leadership has on team dynamics and individual motivation.

## **Conclusion**

As a whole, I set out to understand the contingencies and multi-level processes through which differentiated empowering leadership impacts the dynamic performance of teams and individuals within teams. I developed and tested a theoretical model that proposed that differentiated empowering leadership impacted team and individual dynamic performance by generating team relationship conflict and empowering leadership-social comparisons. Data collected across multiple companies in four distinct industries only fully supported a single hypothesis (e.g., empowering leadership-social

comparison leads to higher psychological empowerment, above and beyond the effects of LMX and individual-focused empowering leadership). Nonetheless, ad-hoc analyses revealed that there may be other mechanisms through which differentiated empowering leadership impacts team and individual performance (e.g., team and individual engagement). The sparse level of support for my initial model shows that differentiated empowering leadership may not generate intra-team relationship conflict, but the post-hoc analyses reveal that differentiated empowering leadership does compromise the team's collective and individual engagement, which in turn impacts team and individual performance. As a result, the post-hoc analyses reveal that there is a potential dark-side of differentiating the levels of empowering leadership a team leader gives to his/her team members.



## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup> There are two major perspectives of empowerment in the management literature (Spreitzer, 2008). The first perspective is the socio-structural approach to studying empowerment, which looks at how sets of structures, policies, and practices decentralize power and authority throughout organizations, thus enabling employees at lower hierarchical levels to act with less oversight (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Block, 1987; Kanter, 1979, 1983; Spreitzer, 1996). Recently, scholars categorized these socio-structural forms of empowerment into four unique contextual categories: higher performance work practices, socio-political support, work design characteristics, and leadership (Seibert et al., 2011).

The second perspective is psychological empowerment, which Conger and Kanungo (1988) initially argued is a cognitive motivational response to empowering organizational practices that augment employees' perceived effort-performance expectancies (Lawler, 1973) or perceived competence (Bandura, 1986). Subsequently, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) and Spreitzer (1995) further developed the concept of psychological empowerment by arguing that it is a form of intrinsic task motivation that reflects a sense of control over one's work role and an active orientation to one's work role that is manifest in four different cognitions: meaning, self-determination, competence, and impact. *Meaning* refers to the fit between one's work role and personal beliefs, values, and behaviors (Brief & Nord, 1990; Hackman & Oldham, 1975). *Self-determination* involves a sense of choice or control in instigating and regulating one's actions (Deci et al., 1989). *Competence* or self-efficacy is a belief in one's ability to skillfully perform one's work tasks (Bandura, 1986; Gist, 1987). Finally, *impact* is the extent to which a person can significantly influence strategic, administrative, or operational activities and outcomes in one's surrounding environment (Abramson, Seligman, Teasdale, 1978; Ashforth, 1989). Linking the two perspectives, researchers view socio-structural forms of empowerment as contextual predictors of psychological empowerment (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004; Spreitzer, 1996; 2008). In fact, meta-analytic evidence indicates that all four contextual socio-structural forms of empowerment significantly predict individual psychological empowerment, with supportive leadership (which includes empowering leadership) being a particularly potent predictor of it (Seibert et al., 2011).

ii **Table 8** – Overview of Commonly Used Measures of Empowering Leadership

Author	Conceptual Dimensions	Operational Items
Kirkman & Rosen (1999) 14 items	Delegating responsibilities and authority	"Gives me many responsibilities"
	Participative decision-making	"Asks for my advice when making decisions"
	Giving task autonomy	"Controls much of my activities" (reversed)
	Giving goal setting autonomy	"Allows me to set my own goals"
	Giving problem solving autonomy	"Stays out of my way when I am working on my performance problems"
	Encouraging high expectations	"Encourages me to go for high performance"
	Exhibiting confidence	"Is confident in what I can do"
Arnold et al. (2000) 38 items	Informing	"Explains the purpose of the company's policies to me"
	Coaching	"Helps develop good relations among work group members"
	Leading by example	"Sets a good example by the way he/she behaves"
	Showing concern/interacting with the team	"Treats team members as equals"
	Participative decision-making	"Listens to my ideas and suggestions"
Pearce & Sims (2002) 10 items	Encourage self-development	"My team leader encourages me to learn new things"
	Encourage independent action	"My team leader encourages me to search for solutions for problems without supervision"
Ahearne et al. (2005) 10 items	Fostering participative decision making	"My manager often consults me on strategic decisions"
	Expressing confidence in high performance	"My manager believes that I can handle demanding tasks"
	Providing autonomy from beaurocratic constraints	"My manager makes it more efficient for me to do my job by keeping the rules and regulations simple"
	Enhancing meaningfulness of work	"My manager helps me understand how my job fits into 'the bigger picture'"

<sup>iii</sup> Founded on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), leader-member exchange is another leadership construct that is considered a supportive form of leadership, but is fundamentally different from empowering leadership both conceptually and empirically. Conceptually, LMX is a two-way dyadic relationship between a leader and follower (Liden et al., 1997), whereas, empowering leadership focuses on actual leader behaviors targeted at increasing the motivation of employees (Ahearne et al., 2005; Chen et al., 2007). Thus, they are unique in that one focuses on a two-way relationship that entails no specific behaviors, while the other focuses on a specific set of top-down one-way behaviors (e.g., giving autonomy, delegating authority, allowing participation, and encouraging high performance). Along these lines, scholars have argued that “empowering leadership is entirely distinct from the quality of the exchange relationship” by noting that empowering leadership “is a broader motivational leadership style aimed at building employees’ sense of confidence, autonomy and control in work settings” (Sharma & Kirkman, 2015, p. 9). With this in mind, it is possible for followers to report high LMX with leaders who exhibit directive behaviors (giving guidance and detailed direction to accomplish desired goals [House, 1971, 1996]). Empirically, LMX is generally assessed by asking subordinates their perceptions on how one “stands” with his/her leader, how satisfied the leader is with him/her, and how willing one’s supervisor would be to “bail out” the subordinate or use his/her authority to solve the subordinate’s problems (Bauer & Green, 1996; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Scandura & Graen, 1984). In contrast, empowering leadership focuses on specific leadership behaviors that give employees autonomy and authority to resolve their own problems (Ahearne et al., 2005), which is fundamentally different than LMX, which focuses on the supervisors’ willingness to “bail out” or use their power to resolve the subordinate’s problems.

Bass (1985) conceptualized transformational leadership as consisting of four dimensions, which include: idealized influence (being a positive role model and displaying appealing values and beliefs), inspirational motivation (articulating an appealing and compelling vision of change, challenging followers with high expectations, and attaching meaning to subordinates’ tasks), intellectual stimulation (encouraging subordinates to challenge assumptions, taking risks, and soliciting subordinate ideas), and individualized consideration (building unique relationships with subordinates, attending to their individual needs, and providing them with customized coaching) (see also Antonakis & House, 2002). Although transformational leadership has been studied at the individual, team, and organizational levels of analysis (Barrick et al., 2015; Chen, Farh, Campbell-Bush, Wu, & Wu, 2013; Chiaburu et al., 2014), Kark and Shamir (2002) argued that the four dimensions are focused on different targets and as a result influence performance through unique mechanisms. Specifically, they argued that inspirational motivation and idealized influence are targeted at the collective level and impact performance by engendering enhanced social identity. In contrast, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation are targeted at individuals and impact performance by producing augmented personal identification with the leader (see Kark et al., 2003). Subsequently, scholars have leveraged Kark and Shamir’s (2002) argument to study the unique impacts of *individual-focused transformational leadership* (see Wu et al., 2010; Zhang et al., in press; Wang & Howell, 2010).

Although individualized transformational leadership and empowering leadership share some similarities, because they are dyadic in nature and they both consist of asking for follower participation and emphasizing critical thinking, the two forms of leadership are different in at least two unique ways. First, leaders can exhibit individualized transformational leadership behaviors without actually transferring any power or control to their subordinates (Bass, 1997; Martin et al., 2013; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015) which is a hallmark component of empowering leadership (Pearce & Sims, 2002). For example, empowering leaders give followers a large amount of autonomy to set their own goals, develop themselves, and set their own methods to complete tasks. However, according to Kark and Shamir (2002), individualized transformational leaders emphasize leader-follower similarity and mutuality, use their personal relationships with the followers to sell *their* vision or goals to the followers, and actively participate in the followers' development. Second, the theoretical process through which empowering leadership and individualized transformational leadership impacts motivation and performance is unique. For instance, individualized transformational leaders motivate superior employee performance by producing high level connections, which results in employees personally identifying with their leader (see Kark & Shamir, 2002; Kark et al., 2003; Wu et al., 2010). In contrast, empowering leaders promote superior performance by satisfying the employees' psychological needs of autonomy and competence (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Along those lines, research indicates that individualized transformational leadership creates dependence on the leader (Kark et al., 2003), while empowering leadership promotes independence from the leader (Manz & Sims, 1987; 1989; 1991; Vecchio, Justin, & Pearce, 2010). Empirically, Tekleab, Sims, Yun, Tesluk, and Cox (2007) found empowering leadership and transformational leadership to be correlated, but still unique constructs ( $r = .63$ ). Moreover, Pearce et al. (2003) found additional evidence of their conceptual differences by using confirmatory factor analyses to decipher that the two set of leadership behaviors are fundamentally unique.

<sup>iv</sup> It is well established that all individuals possess a need for competence (see Bandura, 1997) and a need to be trusted by and associate with others (i.e., relatedness; see Baumeister & Leary, 1995), thus there is little controversy that competence and relatedness are universal needs (Sheldon et al., 2003). Although research indicates that some people report they desire structure and direction more than autonomy, which is in opposition to SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985), research indicates that all individuals – even those that report a desire for structure and direction – benefit when they are given autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon, Joiner, & Williams, 2003), validating that the need for autonomy is universal. Furthermore, additional research has validated the universal need for autonomy by showing that possessing autonomous motivation toward one's goals and possessing goal autonomy are related to well-being across cultures (Chirkov, Ryan, Kim, & Kaplan, 2003; Lynch, La Guardia, & Ryan, 2009) and across age (Sheldon & Kasser, 2001). In fact, there is extensive research that indicates SDT's three psychological needs additively predict individual performance and other outcomes. For example, fulfilling individuals' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness "are all part of 'what makes for a good day' (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe & Ryan,

2000; Sheldon, Ryan & Reis, 1996), ‘what’s satisfying about satisfying events’ (Sheldon, Elliot, Kim & Kasser, 2001), ‘what makes a secure attachment secure’ (LaGuardia, Ryan, Couchman & Deci, 2000), and ‘what makes personal goals truly personal’ (Sheldon & Elliot, 1998)” (Sheldon et al., 2003, p. 366). In addition, in an organizational setting the fulfillment of the three psychological needs has been linked to superior performance evaluations, engagement, well-being, and reduced anxiety (Baard et al., 2004; Deci & Moller, 2005; Deci, Ryan, Gagné, Leone, Usunov, & Kornazheva, 2001).

<sup>v</sup> Both LMX and individualized transformational leadership are either fully or partly founded on the idea of creating high quality relationships to motivate employee performance. LMX is inherently a type of relational leadership in that it is focused on a two-way relationship of mutual respect (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Liden et al., 1997). With that said, individualized transformational leadership (which consists of individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation) is also strongly focused on leader-employee interpersonal relationships. Indeed, Wu et al. (2010) noted, “both individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation rely on direct contact and close relationships between leaders and followers (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Howell & Hall-Merenda, 1999; Kark & Shamir, 2002).” Along these lines, Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, and Chen (2005) discovered that LMX fully mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and follower task performance and OCBs, further indicating that transformational leadership has a strong relational leadership foundation.

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## APPENDIX A

**Team members were asked to complete the following scales:**

*Individual-focused empowering leadership* (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999) – Time 1

1. Gives me many responsibilities.
2. Makes me responsible for what I do.
3. Asks me for advice when making decisions.
4. Uses my suggestions and ideas when making decision.
5. Lets me control much of my activities.
6. Encourages me to take control of my work.
7. Allows me to set my own goals.
8. Encourages me to come up with my own goals.
9. Stays out of my way when I work on my performance problems.
10. Encourages me to figure out the causes/solutions to my problems.
11. Tells me to expect a lot from myself.
12. Encourages me to go for high performance.
13. Trusts me.
14. Is confident in what I can do.

*Initial individual empowering leadership-social comparison* (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999) – adjusted using LMX-social comparison approach (see Vidyanarthy et al., 2010) – Time 1 and 2

1. My team leader gives me more responsibilities than other team members.
2. My team leader makes me more responsible for what I do than other team members.
3. My team leader asks me for advice when making decisions more often than he/she asks other team members.
4. My team leader uses my suggestions and ideas when making decision more often than he/she uses those of other team members.
5. My team leader lets me control my activities more than he/she lets other team members control their activities.
6. My team leader encourages me to take control of my work more than he/she encourages other team members to take control of their work.
7. My team leader allows me to set my own goals more than he/she allows other team members to set their own goals.
8. My team leader encourages me to come up with my own goals more than he/she encourages other team members to set their own goals.
9. My team leader stays out of my way when I work on my performance problems more than he/she stays out of the way when other team members work on their performance problems.
10. My team leader encourages me to figure out the causes/solutions to my problems more than he/she encourages other team members to figure out the causes/solutions to their problems.

11. My team leader tells me to expect a lot from myself more than he/she tells other team members to expect a lot from themselves.
12. My team leader encourages me to go for high performance more than he/she encourages other team members to go for high performance.
13. My team leader trusts me more than he trusts other team members.
14. My team leader is more confident in what I can do than he/she is about what other team members can do.

*Revised individual empowering leadership-social comparison* (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999)  
– (Time 1)

1. Relative to the other members of your team, how many responsibilities does your team leader give you?
2. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader make you responsible for what you do?
3. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader ask you for advice and ideas when making decisions?
4. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader use your suggestions and ideas when making decisions?
5. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader let you control your work activities?
6. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader encourage you to take control of your work?
7. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader allow you to set your own goals?
8. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader encourage you to come up with your own goals?
9. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader stay out of the way when you are working on your performance problems?
10. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader encourage you to figure out the causes/solutions to your problems?
11. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader tell you to expect a lot from yourself?
12. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader encourage you to go for high performance?
13. Relative to the other members of your team, how much does your team leader trust you?
14. Relative to the other members of your team, how confident is your team leader in what you can do?

*Leader-member exchange* (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) – Time 1 and 2

1. I know where I stand with my supervisor in that I usually know how satisfied my supervisor is with me.
2. My supervisor understands my problems and needs.
3. My supervisor recognizes my potential well.

4. Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, my supervisor would be personally inclined to use his/her power to help me solve problems in my work.
5. Regardless of the amount of formal authority my supervisor has, he/she would “bail me out” at his/her expense.
6. I have enough confidence in my supervisor that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so.
7. I would characterize the working relationship I have with my supervisor as extremely effective.

*Leader-member exchange-social comparison* (Vidyarthi et al., 2010) – Time 1 and 2

1. I have a better relationship with my team leader than most others in my team.
2. When my team leader cannot make it to an important meeting/event, it is likely he/she will ask me to fill in.
3. Relative to the others in my team, I receive more support from my team leader.
4. The working relationship I have with my team leader is more effective than the relationships most members of my team have with my team leader.
5. My team leader is more loyal to me compared to my other team members.
6. My team leader enjoys my company more than he/she enjoys the company of other team members.

*Psychological empowerment* (Spreitzer, 1995) – Time 2

1. The work I do in the team is very important to me.
2. My job activities in the team are personally meaningful to me.
3. The work I do in the team is meaningful to me.
4. I am confident about my ability to do my job in the team.
5. I am self-assured about my capabilities to perform my work activities in the team.
6. I have mastered the skills necessary for my job in the team
7. I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my work in the team.
8. I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work in the team.
9. I have considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do my job in the team.
10. My impact on what happens in the team is large.
11. I have a great deal of control over what happens in the team.
12. I have significant influence over what happens in the team.

*Team Engagement* (Originally developed by Rich et al., 2010 and later shortened and altered to capture collective organizational engagement by Barrick et al., 2015)

1. My team members and I really “throw” ourselves into our work.
2. I find nearly everyone on my team devotes a lot of effort and energy to our work.
3. My team members and I gain considerable pride from performing our jobs well.
4. Nearly every team member on my team feels passionate and enthusiastic about our jobs.



5. Performing work in my team (as a whole) is so absorbing that we often forget about the time.
6. My team members and I tend to be highly focused when doing our jobs.

*Individual Engagement* (Originally developed by Rich et al., 2010 and later shortened by Barrick et al., 2015)

1. I really “throw” myself into my work.
2. I devote a lot of effort and energy to my work.
3. I gain considerable pride from performing my job well.
4. I feel passionate and enthusiastic about my job.
5. Performing work is so absorbing that I often forget about the time.
6. I tend to be highly focused when doing my job.

**Team leaders were asked to complete the following scales:**

*Team Learning* (Adapted from Edmondson (1999) by Drach-Zahavy and Somech (2001) and used by Van der Vegt & Bunderson, 2005) (1 = “Strongly Agree” and 7 = “Strongly Disagree”)

1. Team members critique each other’s work in order to improve performance.
2. Team members freely challenge the assumptions underlying each other’s ideas and perspectives.
3. Team members engage in evaluating their weak points in attaining effectiveness.
4. Team members utilize different opinions for the sake of obtaining optimal outcomes.

*Overall Team Performance* (Griffin et al., 2007; Edmondson, 1999)

1. Team meets or exceeds its expectations.
2. Team does superb work.
3. Critical quality errors occur frequently in this team’s work. (Reversed)
4. Team carries out the core tasks of its job well.
5. Team completes core tasks well using the standard procedures.
6. Team ensures its tasks are completed properly.

## APPENDIX B

**TABLE 9** – Breakdown of Missing Data Within Team- and Individual-level Analyses

<i>Final Team-Level Sample for 1<sup>st</sup> Stage of Indirect Effect</i>	72
<i>Final Team-Level Sample for 2<sup>nd</sup> Stage of Indirect Effect</i>	69
<i>Breakdown of Missing Data at Team Level</i>	
No Team Performance Data (Failed Supervisor Report)	3
<i>Final Sample for All Individual and Cross-Level Analyses</i>	206
<i>Breakdown of Missing Data at Individual Level</i>	
No Individual Performance Data (Failed Supervisor Report)	10
No Updated Empowering Leadership-Social Comparison Data	27
Empowering Leadership-Social Comparison Data at Time 2	27
No Participation within Time 1 Survey	25
No Participation within Time 2 Survey	31
Missing Some Demographic Control Data	22
Total Sample of Individuals that Participated in the Study	348

## APPENDIX C

If I only include data that meet a more stringent inclusion criteria (highlighted below), then some of the proposed team-level effects begin to become significant. For example, differentiated empowering leadership is positively related to team relationship conflict ( $\gamma = .52, p = .06$ ), which is subsequently predictive of team performance ( $\gamma = -.31, p = .08$ ). The descriptive statistics for the stringent data inclusion approach is found in Table 10.

### Stringent Inclusion Criteria

1. Team members completed both survey 1 and survey 2
2. Team leader completed the survey
3. Team members rated empowering leadership-social comparison in survey 1
4. At least three team members completed the two survey
5. At least half of the team members completed both survey 1 and survey 2

**TABLE 10** – Descriptive Statistics of More Stringent Data Inclusion Approach

Level 2 (between-team)		Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Differentiated Industry Tenure	7.06	6.71	--							
2	Mean Industry Tenure	10.78	7.95	.57*	--						
3	Leader Gender	1.33	.48	.02	-.00	--					
4	Leader Ethnicity	2.98	1.90	-.21	-.25	-.02	--				
5	Leader Company Tenure	13.35	9.54	.06	.37*	.18	.02	--			
6	Team Size	4.73	2.14	.08	-.02	.07	.19	.20	--		
7	Differentiated Empowering Leadership	.79	.45	.24	-.05	-.27	.10	.02	.20	--	
8	Mean Empowering Leadership	5.58	.63	-.05	.19	.11	-.12	-.02	-.29*	-.68*	--
9	LMX Differentiation	.94	.54	.19	.07	-.10	.05	.14	.10	.50*	-.49*
10	Mean LMX	5.33	.64	-.00	.10	.14	-.12	.06	-.16	-.49*	.61
11	Team Task Interdependence	5.54	1.18	.08	-.03	.09	-.13	-.07	.26	-.18	.17
12	Relationship Conflict	2.03	.56	-.20	-.04	-.02	.01	.12	.30*	.23	-.19
13	Team Proactivity	5.92	.83	-.33*	-.26	.15	.02	-.02	-.10	-.23	.29*
14	Team Adaptability	5.80	.84	-.23	-.13	.03	.22	.05	-.08	.04	-.00
15	Team Task Performance	6.03	.65	-.16	.04	.20	.18	.12	-.14	.11	.15

\*  $p < .05$ ;  $n = 51$  teams; 192 team members

**TABLE 10 – Continued**

Level 2 (Between Teams)		Mean	s.d.	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
9	LMX Differentiation	.94	.54	--						
10	Mean LMX	5.33	.64	-.56*	--					
11	Team Task Interdependence	5.54	1.18	-.19	.12	--				
12	Relationship Conflict	2.03	.56	.12	-	.25	--			
13	Team Proactivity	5.92	.83	-.28*	.27	.35*	.16	--		
14	Team Adaptability	5.80	.84	.06	.12	.03	-.01	.52*	--	
15	Team Task Performance	6.03	.65	-.15	.27	.03	-.04	.62*	.55*	--

\*  $p < .05$ ;  $n = 51$  teams; 192 team members